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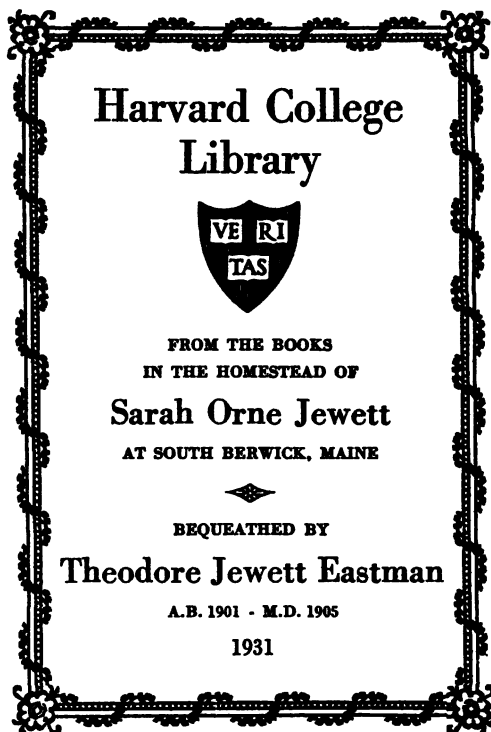
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J. T. Fields

THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT

AS INTERPRETED IN THE

POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

Printed by R. & R. Clark

FOR

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THE
ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT

AS INTERPRETED IN THE
POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

BY
WILLIAM KNIGHT
PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS

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P R E F A C E.



THIS little book is not a new attempt at criticism, an endeavour to estimate the genius, or to weigh the merits, of the poetry of Wordsworth.¹ Its aim is much humbler : viz., to interpret the poems, by bringing out the singularly close connection between them, and the district of the English Lakes, and by explaining Wordsworth's numerous allusions to the locality. As such, it is only one small stone added to the cairn, that is being raised to his memory, by the devotion of successive generations.

It aims at being a guide to the Poems, more than to the District ; and to the District, only in so far as it is reflected in, and interpreted by, the Poems. It necessarily takes for granted a certain knowledge of both. The latter, however, are no longer 'caviare to the multitude.' The number of those who can trace to their influence much of what is highest and

¹ To a certain extent this is done in the Lecture printed as an Appendix.

best within them is multiplying with the spread of culture, and almost in proportion to the complexity of our civilisation ; while the peculiar charm of the former is increasingly felt by Englishmen.

Many of Wordsworth's allusions to Place are obscure ; and the exact localities, as well as individual objects, are difficult to identify. It is doubtful if he cared whether they could be afterwards traced out or not ; and in reference to one (see p. 53), when asked by a friend to indicate the particular spot, he refused to localise it, saying, " Oh yes ; that, or any other that will suit." Besides, in some of his most realistic passages, he avowedly weaves together a description of places remote from each other. Numerous instances of this will occur as we proceed.

It is true that 'poems of places' are not meant to be photographs ; and were they simply to reproduce the features of a particular district, and be an exact transcript of reality, they would be literary photographs and not poems. Poetry cannot, in the nature of things, be a mere register of phenomena appealing to the eye or the ear. No imaginative writer, however, within the range of English literature, is so peculiarly identified with locality as Wordsworth is ; and there is not one on the roll of poets, the appreciation of whose writings is more aided by an intimate knowledge of the district in which he lived.

Homer can be understood without a visit to the Troad, or the Ægean; but the *power* of Wordsworth cannot be fully known by one who is a stranger to Westmoreland. The wish to be able definitely to associate his poems with the places which suggested them, and which they interpret, is natural to every one who has ever felt the spell of his genius. It is indispensable to all who would know the peculiar charm of a Region which he characterised as 'a national property,' and of which he, beyond all other men, may be said to have effected the literary 'conveyance' to posterity.

These poems are the best, and, in one sense, the only needed, 'guide' to the whole of that classic ground. It is ground which they have *made* classic. They have done more for the north of England than the novels and metrical romances of Sir Walter Scott have done for Scotland: and Scott's are the only works which, in this connection, can be even remotely compared with Wordsworth's. There is, however, another and a most interesting scientific work, in reference to Scotland, with which the poetic interpretation of the English Lakes may be contrasted. It is Professor Geikie's book on *The Scenery and Geology of Scotland*, in which he endeavours to interpret the present physical character of the country, by explaining the forces that have been moulding it for cen-

turies, shaping its valleys, and determining the form of its mountains and coast lines. It is by far the best guide to Scottish scenery, because it contains a scientific exposition of the processes by which the country has come to be what it now is. The poetry of Wordsworth fulfils a yet nobler, though quite a kindred, function for Cumberland and Westmoreland ; interpreting the scenery as it now is, by laying hold of its inner meaning, its perennial spirit, and embodying its deep underlying significance, in imaginative forms of unparalleled grace and power. This, apart from everything else, will give permanence to his poetry.

It will doubtless be asked, What is the use of a *minute* identification of all these places? Is not the general fact that Wordsworth described this district of Mountain, Vale, and Mere sufficient, without any further attempt at localisation? The question is more important, and has wider bearings than may appear upon the surface.

On the one hand, it must be admitted, that the discovery of the precise point of every local allusion is not necessary to an understanding or appreciation of the poems ; and in some instances it is unattainable. It must also be understood that Wordsworth was never contented with simply copying what he saw in nature. Even in reference to his early poem, *The Evening Walk*, written in his eighteenth year, he tells

us that the plan of the poem was "not confined to a particular walk or an individual place ; a proof (of which I was unconscious at the time) of my unwillingness to submit the poetic spirit to the chains of fact and real circumstance. The country is idealised rather than described in any one of its local aspects."¹

In *The Excursion* he leaps from Langdale to Grasmere, over to Paterdale, back to Grasmere, and again to Haweswater, without warning : and even in the case of the *Duddon Sonnets* he introduces a description taken direct from Rydal. Mr. Aubrey de Vere tells us of a conversation he had with Wordsworth, in which he passionately condemned the ultra-realistic poets, who went out into the presence of nature, with 'pencil and note-book, and jotted down whatever struck them most ;' adding, "Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms ! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home ; fixed his eye, as he walked, with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Afterwards he would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated. That which remained, the picture surviving in his mind, *would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large*

¹ *The Prose Works of Wordsworth*, vol. iii. p. 5.

part, by discarding much which, though in itself striking was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental.”¹

In these sentences, and especially in the one I have italicised, a thought is expressed which lies very near the centre of the philosophy of creative art. It will no doubt depend upon the power of the ‘inward eye,’ and of the reproducing idealising mind, whether the poetic result is a travestie of nature, or the expression of truth higher than nature yields. But in keeping with what Wordsworth so felicitously expressed to Mr. de Vere, it is obvious that a mere inventory of places mentioned by him, however accurate, would afford no real help to the understanding of his poetry.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the identification of a particular place in many instances casts a sudden light upon obscure passages in the poems, and is by far the best commentary that can be given. It is a great thing to be able to compare the actual scene, which suggested the ideal creation, with the latter, which arose out of it, and was both Wordsworth’s reading of the text of Nature, and his interpretation of it. In his seventy-third year, looking back on the *Descriptive Sketches* written at school,—and during his first two college vacations,—he said, that there was not an image in the poem which he

¹ *Prose Works*, iii. p. 487.

had not observed, and that he "recollected the time and place when most of them were noticed." In the notes dictated to Miss Fenwick, he frequently says, "The fact occurred strictly as recorded;" and, very often, the "fact" involves the accessories of place. I cannot doubt that, in the case of one so faithful and literal in detail, as Wordsworth was, the discovery of his minutest allusions will prove an aid to the understanding and appreciation of the poems.

Nor will the work which this volume attempts be deemed superfluous by those who know the district well, and associate it pre-eminently with this poet, if they have ever tried to trace out the allusions in the 'Poems on the naming of Places,' or even to discover *Michael's sheepfold*, to identify *Ghimmer Crag*, or *Thurston-mere*; not to speak of the individual 'rocks' and 'recesses' described in *The Excursion*, near Blea Tarn, at the head of Little Langdale. Every one knows Kirkstone Pass, Aira Force, Dungeon Ghyll, and Helm Crag; but where is *Emma's Dell*, or "the meeting point of two highways" described so characteristically in the twelfth Book of the *Prelude*,¹ and who will determine for us the pool in Rydal Upper Park, immortalised in the poem to M. H. (see p. 63), or identify *Joanna's Rock*?

Much has already been done in the direction indi-

¹ *Prose Works*, pp. 329-330, sixth edition, 1850.

cated, but more remains to reward intelligent and zealous inquiry. The notes, and illustrations of the poems, dictated by Wordsworth himself to Miss Fenwick, are the most valuable of all existing memoranda, and are in themselves a singularly precious literary relic. But some of his most characteristic poems require further commentary, which can be obtained only after minute study of the places mentioned. Many of these are themselves undergoing change, and becoming more difficult to identify every year. Such a memorial, for example, as 'the Rock of Names,' on the shore of Thirlmere, is threatened with immersion fathoms deep below the waters of a Manchester reservoir. Others are perishing through the wear and tear of time, the decay of old buildings, the alteration of roads, the cutting down of trees, and the modernising or 'improving' of the district generally. All this is inevitable. But as the poet wrote for posterity, it is a matter for thankfulness that many of the natural objects, over and around which the light of his genius lingers, are out of the reach of 'improvements,' and are indestructible even by machinery.

The attempt to identify localities, which some might prefer to leave undisturbed in the realm of imagination, is undertaken only for those who find their interest in the poems intensified by such realistic

detail—those who already feel grateful for the work which Miss Fenwick undertook. If it be objected, that some of the places which we now try to identify, in the earlier poems, were purposely left unrevealed in the Fenwick notes, it may be replied that Death and Time have removed probable reasons for reticence, especially in poems alluding to domestic and friendly ties. By dictating the notes for the gratification of a small and private circle, Wordsworth himself sanctioned the principle, which is now only carried out more fully; and much of his own descriptive detail is more minute and runs farther into matters of secondary interest, than that attempted in this volume. All experience shows, moreover, that posterity takes a great and growing interest in exact topographical illustrations of the works of great authors. I need only refer to the labour recently bestowed upon localities associated with Shakspeare, and with Burns, and to the success which has attended it.

The localities most deeply and permanently identified with Wordsworth are the following :—Grasmere, where he lived during the years of his ‘poetic prime,’ and where he is buried; Lower Easdale, where he spent so many days with his sister, by the side of the brook, and on the terraces at Lancrigg (where *The Prelude* was written); Rydal Mount, where he spent the latter half of his life, and where he found one of

the most perfect retreats in England; and the old (upper) path between Rydal and Grasmere, under Nab Scar, his favourite walk during his later years, where he composed hundreds of verses. There is scarcely a rock or mountain-summit, a stream or tarn, or even a well, a grove, or a forest-side in all that neighbourhood, which is not imperishably associated with this poet, who at once (as I hope to show) interpreted them, as they had never been interpreted before, and added

The gleam,
The light, that never was on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream.

Most persons are aware that Wordsworth himself wrote a "Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a description of the Scenery, etc." It appeared as early as 1810; a fifth edition was published in 1835. Totally unlike ordinary 'Guide-books,' this unpretending volume is weighted with reflections on aspects of Nature missed by the ordinary eye, and contains exquisite side glances into the very heart of those familiar things 'that border the highway.'

Of the district generally, Wordsworth remarks: "I do not know any tract of country in which, within so narrow a compass, may be found an equal variety in the influences of light and shadow upon the sublime

and beautiful features of landscape. . . . Though clustered together, every valley has its distinct and separate character ; in some instances as if they had been formed in studied contrast to each other, and in others with the differences and resemblances of a sisterly rivalry" (sect. 1). He goes on to point out, in a singularly striking and original manner, the peculiar features which make this region unique, not only in England but in Europe, alluding in succession to the mountains, both in their form and colouring, to the vales, the lakes, the islands, the tarns, the rivers, and the woods. As there is no finer delineation of the district, except in his own poetry, I may quote a few sentences from this 'Guide.' Referring to the lake, he says : "Its form is most perfect when it least resembles that of a river, . . . a body of still water under the influence of no current ; reflecting, therefore, the clouds, the light, and all the imagery of the sky and surrounding hills ; expressing, also, and making visible, the changes of the atmosphere and motions of the lightest breeze, and subject to agitation only from the winds." Alluding to the tarns, round the margin of which large boulders lie scattered—"some defying conjecture as to the means by which they came hither, and others obviously fallen from on high, the contribution of ages" (and this, it must be remembered, was written before the rise of modern geology, and while

the glacial theory was unknown)—he adds, characteristically, “A not unpleasing sadness is induced by this perplexity, and these images of decay.” Speaking of the climate of the district, and of the skiey influences generally, he remarks, “The rain comes down here *heartily*, and is frequently succeeded by clear bright weather, when every brook is vocal, and every torrent sonorous, brooks and torrents which are never muddy except after a drought. Days of unsettled weather, with partial showers, are frequent; but the showers, darkening or brightening as they fly from hill to hill, are not less grateful to the eye than finely interwoven passages of gay and sad music are touching to the ear. Vapours exhaling from the lakes and meadows after sunrise, in a hot season, or in moist weather brooding upon the heights, or descending towards the valleys with inaudible motion, give a visionary character to everything around them, and are in themselves so beautiful as to dispose us to enter into the feelings of those simple nations by whom they are taken for the Guardian Deities of the mountains, or to sympathise with others who have fancied these delicate apparitions to be the spirits of their departed ancestors. Akin to these are fleecy clouds resting upon the hill tops. Such clouds cleaving to their stations, or lifting up suddenly their glittering heads from behind rocky barriers, or hurry-

ing out of sight with speed of the sharpest edge, will often tempt an inhabitant to congratulate himself on belonging to a country of mists, and clouds, and storms, and make him think of the blank sky of Egypt, and the cerulean vacancy of Italy, as an unanimated and even a sad spectacle." Finally, he says that as "in human life there are moments worth ages, so, in the climate of England, there are, for the lover of nature, days which are worth whole months, I might say even years. . . . It is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene; the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonised; and in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. A resident in a country like this which we are treating of, will agree with me that the presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days; and he must have experienced, while looking on the unruffled waters, that *the imagination, by their aid, is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable.* The reason of this is that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is neces-

sarily looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element."¹

Perhaps Wordsworth's finest description (in prose) of the outward features of any single object in Nature is that contained in a letter to Coleridge,² giving an account of his visit to the waterfall near Hardrane in Yorkshire, on his way to Grasmere, to settle down there, in 1799.

In that chapter of his 'Guide' in which he speaks of the best time for visiting the district, he mentions successively certain features of Nature,—which afford a good illustration of the way in which he passed from the external features of a scene, or those of which the senses take cognisance, to its underlying spirit. He first refers to "the tender green of the after-grass upon the meadows, interspersed with islands of gray or mossy rock." He then alludes to the notes of birds, which, "when listened to, by the side of broad still waters, or heard in unison with the murmuring of mountain brooks, have the compass of their powers enlarged accordingly;" next, of the "imaginative influence of the voice of the cuckoo when that voice has taken possession of a deep mountain valley." Again he writes: "He is the most fortunate who chances to be involved in vapours which open, and

¹ *Guide*, section 1.

² *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 150, etc.

let in an extent of country partially, or, dispersing suddenly, reveal the whole region from centre to circumference.”¹

In order to show what Wordsworth saw in Nature, and *how* he saw it, I must, of necessity, quote very largely from the Poems; and, in doing so, I shall depart from the poet's own arrangement of them, and follow an order partly chronological and partly topographic. It seems natural to begin with Cockermouth, his birthplace, and to pass thence to Hawkshead, where his wonderful ‘school-time’ was passed, and where his spirit received the most powerful influences of nature; going on to Grasmere, where he settled at the end of last century; and with that for our centre, radiating in different directions, to Langdale, Paterdale, and Keswick. A chronological edition of the poems is much needed. Were it accompanied with brief explanatory notes, embodying the whole of the I. F. MSS., and clearing up every local allusion, with fifty to a hundred illustrations of the places in the district, to which the poems refer, it would be a most valuable memorial of the Poet, and a real addition to the standard works in English Literature. It would be welcomed not so much by those who delight in making pilgrimages to the shrines of the illustrious, as by those—and their number is increasing year by

¹ *Guide*, section 4.

year—who have been helped to understand Nature and Human Life by this great teacher of the nineteenth century.

A different arrangement of certain of the poems is given in this volume. They are grouped together according to the districts to which they refer, and which they describe. This leads of necessity to a partial dismemberment of the poems, which would be altogether inadmissible in a collective edition of the poet's works. But a volume of Selections, limited to those which allude to localities in the Lake country, with the relevant portions of the I. F. MSS. appended to each extract, would be found to cast an unexpected flood of light upon the whole district, and the poet's work in connection with it. Although I attempt to do a little more than merely to select and rearrange, any value which this book may have will be in proportion to the ease with which the commentary is forgotten in the realisation of the poems themselves.

It remains for me to express my obligation, in the (sometimes difficult) task of identifying obscure places and tracing out obscure allusions, to Dr. Cradock, the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford—who knows more of the district, in connection with Wordsworth, than any one I have met with,—and to Lady Richardson; also, through the medium of Dr. Cradock, to

the Cookson family—neighbours and friends of the poet, during a large portion of his life. The extent of my indebtedness to Dr. Cradock will be apparent in the volume itself. I only wish that he had undertaken the work, instead of myself.

My thanks are also due to Mr. William Wordsworth, the son of the poet, for permission to make use of those passages from *The Prelude*, and other copyright poems, which I have quoted,—permission which he has generously granted.

I append a Lecture on Wordsworth, delivered this spring at Cockermouth, to “The Cumberland Association for the Advancement of Literature and Science;” and afterwards to “The Ladies’ Association for the Promotion of the higher Education of Women,” in Cork.

In all quotations from the poems, I refer to the small ‘pocket edition’ of 1849, in six volumes, as being probably more widely used, if not more generally known, than the larger edition of 1857, or the Centenary one. The quotations from *The Prelude* are from the octavo edition of 1850. In alluding to the I. F. MSS. I quote from the version given in *The Prose Works* published in 1876, rather than from the extracts given in the *Memoirs*, or in the 1857 and Centenary edition of the Poems, since the editor assures us that they are given “completely and in

integrity." In any subsequent edition of the Prose Works, however, these notes will require careful revision.

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

ST. ANDREWS, *October 1*, 1878.

CHAPTER I.

COCKERMOUTH, ETC.

It is to the autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, that one naturally turns to find out how Wordsworth felt towards Cockermouth, the place of his birth ; and how he interpreted the surrounding district.

In the first book, alluding to the Derwent, he says that

One, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams. For this, didst thou
O Derwent ! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves ?
When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terrace walk ;
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,

In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;
 Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
 Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
 The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
 Of yellow ragwort ; or when rock and hill,
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
 Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
 A naked savage, in the thunder shower.¹

The "mill-race" may easily be guessed, but is too vaguely described to be known with accuracy ; and the "sandy fields" must be those close to the "race" itself. The "towers" are, of course, those of Cockermouth Castle. The "terrace walk" is at the foot of the garden attached to the old mansion in the town in which he was born, and in which his father, who was law-agent of the Lonsdale family, resided.

Two of the sonnets composed in 1833 refer to his birthplace ; the first, suggested *In sight of the Town of Cockermouth (where the Author was born, and his Father's remains are laid)* ;² the second, *An Address to the Spirit of Cockermouth Castle*.³ Neither of them need be quoted ; but another in the same series, and of the same date, addressed *To the River Derwent*, is as follows :—

Among the mountains were we nursed, loved Stream !
 Thou near the eagle's nest—within brief sail,
 I, of his bold wing floating on the gale,
 Where thy deep voice could lull me ! Faint the beam

¹ *Prelude*, book i. p. 14.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. iii. p. 146.

³ *Ibid.*

Of human life when first allowed to gleam
 On mortal notice.—Glory of the vale,
 Such thy meek outset, with a crown, though frail,
 Kept in perpetual verdure by the steam
 Of thy soft breath !—Less vivid wreath entwined
 Nemæan victor's brow ; less bright was worn,
 Meed of some Roman chief—in triumph borne
 With captives chained ; and shedding from his car
 The sunset splendours of a finished war
 Upon the proud enslavers of mankind !¹

It was in reference to this home of his childhood that, in 1801, he wrote the poem he called *The Sparrow's Nest* ; the “sister Emmeline” referred to in it being his only sister, Dorothy.

Behold, within the leafy shade,
 Those bright blue eggs together laid !
 On me the chance-discovered sight
 Gleamed like a vision of delight.
 I started—seeming to espy
 The home and sheltered bed,
 The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
 My Father's house, in wet or dry
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together visited.

She looked at it, and seemed to fear it ;
 Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it :
 Such heart was in her, being then
 A little Prattler among men.
 The Blessing of my later years
 Was with me when a boy :
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iii. p. 145.

And humble cares, and delicate fears :
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;
And love, and thought, and joy.¹

In the thirteenth book of *The Prelude* there is an allusion to an experience of childhood, which must refer to Cockermouth, and which I do not think any one has hitherto traced out :—

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way? the sight,
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
On my imagination since the morn
Of childhood, when a disappearing line
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far-off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
Was like an invitation into space
Boundless, or guide into eternity.²

For a hint in reference to this road, I have been indebted to Dr. Henry Dodgson of Cockermouth. Referring to a suggestion that it might be the road leading to Bridekirk, Dr. Dodgson writes (July 1878), "I scarcely think that road answers to the description. The hill over which it goes is not naked, but well wooded, and has probably been so for many years. Besides, it is not visible from Wordsworth's house, nor from the garden behind it. This garden extends from the house to the river Derwent, from which it is separated by a wall, with a raised terraced walk on the inner side, and nearly on a level with the top. I understand that this terrace was in existence in the poet's time. . . .

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 148.

² *Prelude*, book xiii. p. 341.

Its direction is nearly due east and west; and looking eastwards from it, there is a hill which bounds the view in that direction, and which fully corresponds to the description in *The Prelude*. It is from one and a half to two miles distant, is of considerable height, is bare and destitute of trees, and has a road going directly over its summit, as seen from the terrace in Wordsworth's garden. The road is now used only as a footpath; but fifty or sixty years ago it was the highroad to Isel, a hamlet on the Derwent, about three and a half miles from Cockermouth, in the direction of Bassenthwaite Lake. The hill is locally called 'The Hay;' but on the Ordnance map it is marked 'Watch Hill.'"

There can be no doubt, I think, as to the accuracy of this suggestion. No other hill-road is visible from the house or garden at Cockermouth. The view from the front of the old mansion is limited by houses, doubtless more so now, than in last century; but there is no hill towards the Lorton Fells on the south or south-east, with a road over it, visible from any part of the town. Besides, this must have been a very early experience of Wordsworth's childhood (he had not as yet walked two miles), and the road was one "*daily* present to his sight." It must, therefore, have been seen either from the house or the garden. It is almost certain that he is referring to that path over the Hay, or Watch Hill, which he and his 'sister Emmeline' could see daily, from the terrace at the foot of their garden.

CHAPTER II.

HAWKSHEAD, WINDERMERE, CONISTON, ETC.

PASSING to Hawkshead, where Wordsworth was sent to school in his ninth year, we find much more than at Cockermouth that speaks to us of the poet, and is immortalised by his description or allusion. The old market town of Hawkshead, where he spent more than eight years (1778 to 1786), is one of the quaintest in the Lake District. The irregular outline of the narrow winding streets; the pavement of single slates covering "the famous brook," which gives the name of Flag Street to one of them; the low archways; the picturesque frontages of the houses, with their many-paned windows and primitive chimneys; the open court in the centre of the town; the church upon the hill, with its winding approach; and the ancient grammar-school below it, for three centuries a famed academy;—all these things give a visitor to Hawkshead a succession of quaint surprises. It is in *The Prelude* that Wordsworth has written most about his school life and summer vacations at Hawkshead, and of that wonderful spring-time which he there enjoyed.

The snow-white church upon the hill
Sits like a thronèd lady, sending out
A gracious look all over her domain.¹

¹ *Prelude*, book iv. p. 86.

It is no longer snow-white, a "restoration" having taken place within recent years on architectural principles. The plaster is stripped from the outside of the church, which is now of a dull stone colour. "Apart from poetic sentiment," says Dr. Cradock, "it may be doubted whether the pale colour still preserved at Grasmere and other churches in the district, does not better harmonise with the scenery and atmosphere of the Lake country." The church, however, is still a conspicuous object as you approach Hawkshead by the Ambleside road or from Sawrey. It is the latter approach that Wordsworth describes, in his account of his return to Hawkshead from Cambridge, during a summer vacation. The school in which he was taught (founded by Archbishop Sandys of York, in 1585) is still very much as it was in Wordsworth's time. The main schoolroom is on the ground-floor. One small chamber on the first floor was used in his day by the head-master for teaching a few advanced pupils. In another is a library, formed in part by the donations of the scholars; it being a local custom for each pupil to present a volume on leaving school, or to send one afterwards. On the wall of this room is a tablet recording the names of several masters; and there, in an old oak chest, is kept the original charter of the school. In the oak benches downstairs are deeply cut the names and initials of the boys; and amongst them the name of William Wordsworth may be seen. Towards the close of last century, when he and his three brothers were educated at this school, it was one of the best educational institutions in the north of England. The pupils boarded in the houses of the village dames.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours;

Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own.¹

Wordsworth lived with one Anne Tyson, for whose memory he cherished the warmest regard. Her cottage, the young poet's residence for nine eventful years, remains unaltered externally; and little, if at all, changed in the interior. It is well known, and easily found. It is reached through a picturesque archway nearly opposite the principal village inn (the Lion), and stands on the right of a small open yard which you enter through this archway; while to the left a lane leads westwards to the open country. It is a humble dwelling of two stories; the floor of the basement flat, paved with the blue flags of Coniston slate, is not likely to have been changed since Wordsworth's time. On the upper flat there are two bedrooms to the front, with oaken flooring, one of which must have been occupied by Wordsworth, as he could not otherwise have written of

That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.²

The ash-tree is gone, but there is no doubt as to the

¹ *Prelude*, book i. p. 23.

² *Ibid.* book iv. p. 88.

place where it grew. Mr. Watson, whose father owned and inhabited the house immediately opposite Mrs. Tyson's cottage in Wordsworth's time, and who was himself born in it, tells me that the ash-tree grew on the proper right front of the cottage, where an outhouse is now built. If this be so, Wordsworth's room must have been that on the proper left, with the smaller of the two windows. The cottage faces nearly south-west. Referring to the "old dame so kind and motherly," and her humble dwelling, with its garden, etc., Wordsworth writes :—

The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
Upon thy grave, good creature ! While my heart
Can beat never will I forget thy name.
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
After thy innocent and busy stir
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
And more than eighty, of untroubled life,
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
Honoured with little less than filial love.
What joy was mine to see thee once again,
Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things
About its narrow precincts all beloved,
And many of them seeming yet my own !
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
Have felt, and every man alive can guess ?
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine,
Friendly to studious or to festive hours ;
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth,
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down

(Without an effort and without a will)

A channel paved by man's officious care.¹

There can be little doubt as to the identity of the "famous brook within our garden." "Persons have visited the cottage," says Dr. Cradock, "without discovering it; and yet it is not forty yards distant, and is still exactly as described. On the opposite side of the lane already referred to, a few steps above the cottage, is a narrow passage through some new stone buildings. On emerging from this, you meet a small garden, the farther side of which is bounded by the brook, confined on both sides by large flags, and also covered by flags of the same Coniston formation, through the interstices of which you may see and hear the stream running freely."² The upper flags are now used as a footpath, and lead by another passage back into the village. No doubt the garden has been reduced in size by the use of that part of it fronting the lane for building purposes. The stream, before it enters the area of buildings and gardens, is open by the lane side, and seemingly comes from the hills to the westwards. The large flags are extremely hard and durable, and it is probable that the very flags which paved the channel in Wordsworth's time may be still doing the same duty."

The only difficulty in this identification of the garden is that the adjoining house, to which it would naturally be attached, was not dame Tyson's but Mr. Watson's; and, unless it was let to Mrs. Tyson, or unless Wordsworth was inaccurate in this detail, he may possibly be describing another part of the brook farther up the stream. A good way above the

¹ *Prelude*, book iv. p. 87.

² Therefore, not quite "stripped of its voice."

village, at a place called Walker Ground, the same brook is certainly "boxed within a garden," and there it is literally "stript of its voice" for a considerable distance. The present house is recent; but in two adjoining cottages, boys attending the grammar school were boarded in the beginning of the century, just as at Mrs. Tyson's. Wordsworth *may* be describing a garden at Walker Ground; but, on the whole, I think it was the garden in the village. He says, in the last extract, in reference to the cottage he lived in, that there was "a crowd of things about its narrow precincts all beloved." The garden was, I think, close at hand.

There is neither trace nor tradition, however, of the "dark pine" with the "stone seat" under it. They have disappeared as completely as the

rude mass
Of native rock left midway in the square
Of our small market village,¹

which was

the goal,
Or centre of our sports.²

In the fifth book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth tells us—

Well do I call to mind the very week
When I was first entrusted to the care
Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its streams,
And brooks were like a dream of novelty
To my half-infant thoughts.³

It is thus that he describes the "fair seed-time" of his soul:—

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 34.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* book v. p. 124.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which ere long
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birthdays, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation ; moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befel
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey ; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge ; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh ! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind

Blow through my ear ! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds !¹

The concluding lines of this passage, in which he describes the effect of Nature over him, when, with his school companions, he harried the ravens' nests, might be thought to refer to the same vale—that of Esthwaite—to which the earlier part of the extract alludes. But the scene of these exploits cannot have been that "cultured vale." No ravens build there, or could build in Wordsworth's time ; and there are no "naked crags" with "half-inch fissures in the slippery rock" in Esthwaite. The locality must have been the Holme Fells, above Yewdale, to the north of Coniston, and only a few miles from Hawkshead : where a *Raven's Crag* now divides Tilberthwaite from Yewdale. In confirmation of this, in his *Epistle to Sir George Beaumont*,² Wordsworth speaks of Yewdale as a plain

spread

Under a rock, too steep for man to tread,
When, sheltered from the north, and black north-west,
Aloft the raven hangs a visible nest,
Fearless of all assaults that would her brood molest.

It was in these days, and in holiday rambles to more distant valleys and mountain ranges (quite as much as at a later stage when he visited the Wye), that

the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colour and their forms, were then to him
An appetite : a feeling, and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.³

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 15.

² *Poetical Works*, v. p. 7.

³ *Ibid.* ii. p. 152.

Almost the precise spot of another of his youthful experiences at Hawkshead, recorded in *The Prelude*, can easily be identified—

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on ;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary ; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace ; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan ;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree ;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave

And serious mood ; but after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
 Of unknown modes of being ; o'er my thoughts
 There hung a darkness, call it solitude
 Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.¹

Any one rowing across Esthwaite Lake, or (as that is meanwhile prohibited) any one walking along the eastern shore, can see the very spot to which this refers. The "craggy steep, till then the horizon's bound," is the ridge between Hawkshead and Coniston Moors ; while the "huge peak, black and huge, as if with voluntary power instinct" (which every one who understands Wordsworth recognises as he would a living thing), is the summit of Wetherlam.

A still more characteristic passage from *The Prelude* may here be given in full, as it describes, in immortal verse, the influence of Nature over him—subduing, educating, moulding him—in these early days. It is his own record of the

first virgin passion of his soul
 Communing with this glorious universe.²

It has been often quoted, and is well known ; but it is unrivalled in the picture it gives of the idealism that springs out of real fellowship with Nature. The "silent bays" into which he retired from the tumultuous throng of his school companions to "cut across the reflex of a star" while skating on Esthwaite water

¹ *Prelude*, book i. p. 18.

² *Ibid.* p. 19.

may be easily guessed. There are comparatively few of them in this lake.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul ;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine ;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons : happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,

We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle ; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain ; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round !
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.¹

Probably this skating scene on Esthwaite is the one most vividly associated by the majority of the readers of *The Prelude* with the youth of the poet ; and who, except Wordsworth, would have noticed “the

¹ *Prelude*, book i. p. 19.

alien sound of melancholy" sent into the tumult from "far distant hills"? Who but he would have observed (as in the former part of the above extract), that "vapours rolling down a valley" made "a lonely scene more lonesome"? Every one who has been taught by him must feel a special interest in the surroundings of the Hawkshead district, and the vale of Esthwaite, where he tells us that, in his tenth year, he

Held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation.

Where he

felt
Gleams, like the flashings of a shield, the earth
And common face of Nature spake to him
Rememberable things.

In reference to these days, and these haunts, he thus addresses the Soul of Nature :—

O Soul of Nature ! excellent and fair !
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear ; but never long without the heart
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect :¹

To many it is a better education to endeavour

to retrace
The simple ways in which his childhood walked,
Those chiefly that first led him to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields ;²

¹ *Prelude*, book xii. p. 321. ² *Ibid.* book ii. p. 33.

and to find out the force of the following lines as they bear upon the poet's childhood, than to recall and meditate upon similar experiences of their own :—

These recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, these lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining.¹

The islands in Windermere which were visited on summer half-holidays are easily identified. The two last referred to in the following extract are certainly the Lily of the Valley Island and Lady Holme respectively. The first may have been House Holme or Thomson's Holme. It is less likely to have been Belle Isle, from the greater size of the latter, and from its hardly being a "sister isle" to the one where the lily of the valley still grows "beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert." The "ruins of the shrine" have now disappeared as completely from Lady Holme in Windermere as from St. Herbert's Island in Derwent-water.

When summer came,
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars ; and the selected bourne
Was now an Island musical with birds
That sang and ceased not ; now a Sister Isle
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown
With lilies of the valley like a field ;
And now a third small Island, where survived
In solitude the ruins of a shrine
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
Daily with chaunted rites.²

¹ *Prelude*, book i. p. 29.

² *Ibid.* book ii. p. 35.

The description of the inn, .

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
Within the crescent of a pleasant bay,¹

calls for no special remark ; but one of the incidents in the return home of the youthful party, with its allusion to Robert Greenwood, the "minstrel of the troop," afterwards Senior Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, is too characteristic to be passed over.

But, ere nightfall,
When in our pinnacle we returned at leisure
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course with one,
The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream !
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
X Grew dear to me : already I began
To love the sun ; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold and feel we are alive ;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb,
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.²

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 39.

² *Ibid.* p. 40.

For his teacher in the Hawkshead school, the Reverend William Taylor, Wordsworth cherished the warmest affection. It was the farewell which this master took of his pupils on his deathbed (of whom the poet was one) that suggested the lines addressed to the scholars of Hawkshead, which are inseparably associated with that village school. In that poem are the following lines :—

x Here did he sit confined for hours ;
 But he could see the woods and plains,
 Could hear the wind and mark the showers
 Come streaming down the streaming panes.
 Now stretched beneath his grass-green mound
 He rests a prisoner of the ground.
 He loved the breathing air,
 He loved the sun, but if it rise
 Or set, to him where now he lies,
 Brings not a moment's care.¹

The three poems on Matthew, entitled respectively *Matthew*, *The Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain*,² are full of allusions to Hawkshead and his teachers ; though he tells us, "this schoolmaster was made up of several, like the wanderer in *The Excursion*" (I. F. MSS.) I have found no tradition of a "Leonard's Rock" (vol. iv. p. 199) ; and there are many streams in the neighbourhood, to which the following stanza may refer. It is finer than the refrain of Tennyson's *Brook*—

 Men may come, and men may go,
 But I go on for ever,
 and I wish that the particular stream could be identified.
 No check, no stay, this streamlet fears ;
 How merrily it goes !

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 124. ² *Ibid.* vol. iv. pp. 193-194

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which ere long
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birthdays, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
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The concluding lines of this passage, in which he describes the effect of Nature over him, when, with his school companions, he harried the ravens' nests, might be thought to refer to the same vale—that of Esthwaite—to which the earlier part of the extract alludes. But the scene of these exploits cannot have been that "cultured vale." No ravens build there, or could build in Wordsworth's time ; and there are no "naked crags" with "half-inch fissures in the slippery rock" in Esthwaite. The locality must have been the Holme Fells, above Yewdale, to the north of Coniston, and only a few miles from Hawkshead : where a *Raven's Crag* now divides Tilberthwaite from Yewdale. In confirmation of this, in his *Epistle to Sir George Beaumont*,² Wordsworth speaks of Yewdale as a plain

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It was in these days, and in holiday rambles to more distant valleys and mountain ranges (quite as much as at a later stage when he visited the Wye), that

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Their colour and their forms, were then to him
An appetite : a feeling, and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.³

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 15.

² *Poetical Works*, v. p. 7.

³ *Ibid.* ii. p. 152.

With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.¹

We do not know the house in the vale of Esthwaite,
where, during his summer vacation,

'mid a throng

Of maids and youths, old men and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, he had passed
A night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth ;

but, as it cannot have been far from Hawkshead, his unequalled description of his return homeward at early morning, and the effect produced upon him by the calm and the splendour of the dawn, must be quoted in this connection.

Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as ere I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 49.

A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.¹

In the fourth book of *The Prelude* he describes the road from Windermere to Hawkshead, past Sawrey, by which he returned from a regatta on Windermere; and the place on that road where he met the old dismissed soldier travelling homewards, may be easily guessed.

a long ascent,
Where the road's watery surface, to the top
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon,
And bore the semblance of another stream,
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
That murmured in the vale.²

There is no difficulty in identifying this spot. The brook is Sawrey beck; and the "long ascent" is the second of the two, in crossing from Windermere to Hawkshead, which goes over the ridge between the two Sawreys. It is only there that a brook could be heard "murmuring in the vale."

Another poem, composed in part while at school at Hawkshead, is entitled, cumbrously enough, *Lines left upon a seat on a Yew-tree, which stands near the lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, commanding a beautiful prospect*. In 1843 Wordsworth said, "The tree has disappeared, and the slip of common on which it stood, that ran parallel to the lake and lay open to it, has long been enclosed, so that the road has lost much of its attraction. This spot was my favourite walk in the evenings during the latter part of my school-time." The exact place where the yew-tree stood may be found without difficulty. It was about three-quarters of a mile from Hawkshead, on the

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eastern shore of the lake as you go towards Sawrey, a little above the highway. Mr. Bowman, the son of Wordsworth's last teacher at the grammar school, tells me that it stood about forty yards nearer Hawkshead than the yew which now stands on the roadside and is sometimes called "Wordsworth's yew." In his school-days the road passed right through the unenclosed common, and the tree was a conspicuous object. It was removed, he says, owing to the popular belief that its leaves were poisonous, and might injure the cattle grazing in the common. I heard some persons in Hawkshead call the present tree Wordsworth's yew; and doubtless its proximity to the place where the tree of the poem grew has given rise to the tradition.

Nay, Traveller! rest. This lonely Yew-tree stands
Far from all human dwelling: what if here
No sparkling rivulet spread the verdant herb?
What if the bee love not these barren boughs!
Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,
That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind
By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

——Who he was

That piled these stones and with the mossy sod
First covered, and here taught this aged Tree
With its dark arms to form a circling bower,
I well remember.—He was one who owned
No common soul. In youth by science nursed,
And led by nature into a wild scene
Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth
A favoured Being, knowing no desire
Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint
Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate,
And scorn,—against all enemies prepared,
All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
Owed him no service; wherefore he at once

With indignation turned himself away,
 And with the food of pride sustained his soul
 In solitude.—Stranger ! these gloomy boughs
 Had charms for him ; and here he loved to sit,
 His only visitants a straggling sheep
 The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper :
 And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath,
 And juniper and thistle, sprinkled o'er,
 Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour
 A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here
 An emblem of his own unfruitful life :
 And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze
 On the more distant scene,—how lovely 'tis
 Thou seest,—and he would gaze till it became
 Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
 The beauty, still more beauteous ! Nor, that time,
 When nature had subdued him to herself,
 Would he forget those Beings to whose minds,
 Warm from the labours of benevolence
 The world, and human life, appeared a scene
 Of kindred loveliness : then he would sigh,
 Inly disturbed, to think that others felt
 What he must never feel : and so, lost Man !
 On visionary views would fancy feed,
 Till his eye streamed with tears. In this deep vale
 He died,—this seat his only monument.

† If Thou be one whose heart the holy forms
 Of young imagination have kept pure,
 Stranger ! henceforth be warned ; and know that pride,
 Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
 Is littleness ; that he who feels contempt
 † For any living thing, hath faculties
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The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful ever. O be wiser, Thou !
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love ;
True dignity abides with him alone
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
In lowliness of heart.¹

The following sonnet, which refers to his return to Hawkshead, and to the scenes of his youth, years afterwards, is very characteristic :—

“ Beloved Vale ! ” I said, “ when I shall con
These many records of my childish years,
Remembrance of myself and of my peers
Will press me down : to think of what is gone
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But, when into the Vale I came, no fears
Distressed me ; from mine eyes escaped no tears ;
Deep thought, or dread remembrance, had I none.
By doubts and thousand petty fancies crost
I stood, of simple shame the blushing Thrall :
So narrow seemed the brooks, the fields so small !
A Juggler’s balls old Time about him tossed ;
I looked, I stared, I smiled, I laughed ; and all
The weight of sadness was in wonder lost.²

Perhaps, however, the most remarkable reference to Hawkshead in *The Prelude* has yet to be quoted. It occurs in the twelfth book, and its significance is enhanced by those prefatory words :—

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed

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. our minds
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired ;
 A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
 That penetrates, enables us to mount,
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen,
 Such moments
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
 From our first childhood.¹

He gives an illustration of this from a weird experience on the hills near Cockermouth, where he was riding with "an ancient servant of his father's house," when a mere child, and "could scarcely hold a bridle." He parted from his guide, dismounted through fear, led his horse over "a rough and stony moor," and came to a "bottom," where, "in former times, a murderer had been hung in iron chains." The monumental letters of his name were carved on the turf; and the boy fled, and saw, as he re-ascended the bare common,

A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
 A beacon on the summit, and more near,
 A girl who bore a pitcher on her head.

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It was, in truth,
 An ordinary sight ; but I should need
 Colours and words that are unknown to man,
 To paint the visionary dreariness
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
 Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
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'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
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Those who seek to realise Wordsworth's life at
Hawkshead will remember that his

morning walks
Were early. Oft before the hour of school
I travelled round our little lake, five miles
Of pleasant wandering.²

He also tells us

I would walk alone,
Under the quiet stars, and at that time,
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned ; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power ;³

Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible ; and sate among the woods
Alone upon some jutting eminence,
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin ! where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt ?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
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The stream of song that out his bosom springs,
And to his heart the world back coiling brings,

that I may quote it also.

An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye :¹

From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling ; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still ;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart ;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air ; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven

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With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.¹

We do not know the house in the vale of Esthwaite,
where, during his summer vacation,

'mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, he had passed
A night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth ;

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unequalled description of his return homeward at
early morning, and the effect produced upon him by
the calm and the splendour of the dawn, must be
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Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as ere I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,

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In the fourth book of *The Prelude* he describes the road from Windermere to Hawkshead, past Sawrey, by which he returned from a regatta on Windermere; and the place on that road where he met the old dismissed soldier travelling homewards, may be easily guessed.

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 Such moments
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
 From our first childhood.¹

He gives an illustration of this from a weird experience on the hills near Cockermouth, where he was riding with "an ancient servant of his father's house," when a mere child, and "could scarcely hold a bridle." He parted from his guide, dismounted through fear, led his horse over "a rough and stony moor," and came to a "bottom," where, "in former times, a murderer had been hung in iron chains." The monumental letters of his name were carved on the turf; and the boy fled, and saw, as he re-ascended the bare common,

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The use he makes of this experience is most characteristic, but the place, I fear, cannot be identified. It may have been amongst the Lorton Fells, or the north-western slopes of Skiddaw. He then proceeds to give another of these memorials of his youth, and one still more noteworthy :—

One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home ;
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement ; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope ;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low

To God, who thus corrected my desires ;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain ; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.¹

The precise time of this second experience is easily ascertained from the date of his father's death ; and though the locality is difficult to determine, it must, I think, be one of two places. His father died at Penrith, and it was there that the sons went for their Christmas holiday. The road from Penrith to Hawkshead was by Kirkstone Pass and Ambleside ; and the "led palfreys" sent to carry the boys home would certainly come through the latter town. Now there are only two roads from Ambleside to Hawkshead, which meet at a point about a mile north of Hawkshead, called in the Ordnance map "Outgate." The eastern road is now chiefly used by carriages, being less hilly and better made than the western one, which

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Glorious as ere I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim
My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 49.

A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.¹

In the fourth book of *The Prelude* he describes the road from Windermere to Hawkshead, past Sawrey, by which he returned from a regatta on Windermere ; and the place on that road where he met the old dismissed soldier travelling homewards, may be easily guessed.

a long ascent,
Where the road's watery surface, to the top
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon,
And bore the semblance of another stream,
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
That murmured in the vale.²

There is no difficulty in identifying this spot. The brook is Sawrey beck ; and the "long ascent" is the second of the two, in crossing from Windermere to Hawkshead, which goes over the ridge between the two Sawreys. It is only there that a brook could be heard "murmuring in the vale."

Another poem, composed in part while at school at Hawkshead, is entitled, cumbrously enough, *Lines left upon a seat on a Yew-tree, which stands near the lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, commanding a beautiful prospect*. In 1843 Wordsworth said, "The tree has disappeared, and the slip of common on which it stood, that ran parallel to the lake and lay open to it, has long been enclosed, so that the road has lost much of its attraction. This spot was my favourite walk in the evenings during the latter part of my school-time." The exact place where the yew-tree stood may be found without difficulty. It was about three-quarters of a mile from Hawkshead, on the

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eastern shore of the lake as you go towards Sawrey, a little above the highway. Mr. Bowman, the son of Wordsworth's last teacher at the grammar school, tells me that it stood about forty yards nearer Hawkshead than the yew which now stands on the roadside and is sometimes called "Wordsworth's yew." In his school-days the road passed right through the unenclosed common, and the tree was a conspicuous object. It was removed, he says, owing to the popular belief that its leaves were poisonous, and might injure the cattle grazing in the common. I heard some persons in Hawkshead call the present tree Wordsworth's yew; and doubtless its proximity to the place where the tree of the poem grew has given rise to the tradition.

Nay, Traveller! rest. This lonely Yew-tree stands
Far from all human dwelling: what if here
No sparkling rivulet spread the verdant herb?
What if the bee love not these barren boughs!
Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,
That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind
By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

—Who he was

That piled these stones and with the mossy sod
First covered, and here taught this aged Tree
With its dark arms to form a circling bower,
I well remember.—He was one who owned
No common soul. In youth by science nursed,
And led by nature into a wild scene
Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth
A favoured Being, knowing no desire
Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint
Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate,
And scorn,—against all enemies prepared,
All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
Owed him no service; wherefore he at once

With indignation turned himself away,
 And with the food of pride sustained his soul
 In solitude.—Stranger ! these gloomy boughs
 Had charms for him ; and here he loved to sit,
 His only visitants a straggling sheep
 The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper :
 And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath,
 And juniper and thistle, sprinkled o'er,
 Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour
 A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here
 An emblem of his own unfruitful life :
 And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze
 On the more distant scene,—how lovely 'tis
 Thou seest,—and he would gaze till it became
 Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
 The beauty, still more beauteous ! Nor, that time,
 When nature had subdued him to herself,
 Would he forget those Beings to whose minds,
 Warm from the labours of benevolence
 The world, and human life, appeared a scene
 Of kindred loveliness : then he would sigh,
 Inly disturbed, to think that others felt
 What he must never feel : and so, lost Man !
 On visionary views would fancy feed,
 Till his eye streamed with tears. In this deep vale
 He died,—this seat his only monument.

† If Thou be one whose heart the holy forms
 Of young imagination have kept pure,
 Stranger ! henceforth be warned ; and know that pride,
 Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
 Is littleness ; that he who feels contempt
 † For any living thing, hath faculties
 Which he has never used ; that thought with him
 Is in its infancy. The man whose eye
 Is ever on himself doth look on one,
 The least of Nature's works, one who might move

The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful ever. O be wiser, Thou !
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love ;
True dignity abides with him alone
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
In lowliness of heart.¹

The following sonnet, which refers to his return to Hawkshead, and to the scenes of his youth, years afterwards, is very characteristic :—

“ Beloved Vale ! ” I said, “ when I shall con
These many records of my childish years,
Remembrance of myself and of my peers
Will press me down : to think of what is gone
Will be an awful thought, if life have one.”
But, when into the Vale I came, no fears
Distressed me ; from mine eyes escaped no tears ;
Deep thought, or dread remembrance, had I none.
By doubts and thousand petty fancies crost
I stood, of simple shame the blushing Thrall :
So narrow seemed the brooks, the fields so small !
A juggler’s balls old Time about him tossed ;
I looked, I stared, I smiled, I laughed ; and all
The weight of sadness was in wonder lost.²

Perhaps, however, the most remarkable reference to Hawkshead in *The Prelude* has yet to be quoted. It occurs in the twelfth book, and its significance is enhanced by those prefatory words :—

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. pp. 38, 39.

² *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 261.

. our minds
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired ;
 A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
 That penetrates, enables us to mount,
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen,
 Such moments
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
 From our first childhood.¹

He gives an illustration of this from a weird experience on the hills near Cockermouth, where he was riding with "an ancient servant of his father's house," when a mere child, and "could scarcely hold a bridle." He parted from his guide, dismounted through fear, led his horse over "a rough and stony moor," and came to a "bottom," where, "in former times, a murderer had been hung in iron chains." The monumental letters of his name were carved on the turf; and the boy fled, and saw, as he re-ascended the bare common,

A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
 A beacon on the summit, and more near,
 A girl who bore a pitcher on her head.

He says

It was, in truth,
 An ordinary sight ; but I should need
 Colours and words that are unknown to man,
 To paint the visionary dreariness
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
 Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
 The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
 The female and her garments vexed and tossed
 By the strong wind.²

¹ *Prelude*, book xii. p. 325.

² *Ibid.* p. 327.

The use he makes of this experience is most characteristic, but the place, I fear, cannot be identified. It may have been amongst the Lorton Fells, or the north-western slopes of Skiddaw. He then proceeds to give another of these memorials of his youth, and one still more noteworthy :—

One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home ;
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement ; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope ;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low

To God, who thus corrected my desires ;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain ; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.¹

The precise time of this second experience is easily ascertained from the date of his father's death ; and though the locality is difficult to determine, it must, I think, be one of two places. His father died at Penrith, and it was there that the sons went for their Christmas holiday. The road from Penrith to Hawkshead was by Kirkstone Pass and Ambleside ; and the "led palfreys" sent to carry the boys home would certainly come through the latter town. Now there are only two roads from Ambleside to Hawkshead, which meet at a point about a mile north of Hawkshead, called in the Ordnance map "Outgate." The eastern road is now chiefly used by carriages, being less hilly and better made than the western one, which

¹ *Prelude*, book xii. p. 329.

'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.¹

Those who seek to realise Wordsworth's life at
Hawkshead will remember that his

morning walks

Were early. Oft before the hour of school
I travelled round our little lake, five miles
Of pleasant wandering.²

He also tells us

I would walk alone,

Under the quiet stars, and at that time,
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned ; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power ;³

7 Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible ; and sate among the woods
Alone upon some jutting eminence,
2 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin ! where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt ?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.⁴

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 199.

² *Prelude*, book v. p. 46.

³ *Ibid.* book ii. p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.* book ii. p. 47.

A passage follows this in *The Prelude* which refers to the way in which even in his seventeenth year he received the influences of Nature, and dealt with them. It gives us a key to all that is most distinctive in Wordsworth as a poet, and is so superior to the vagueness of Goethe's sentence about the Poet, and

The stream of song that out his bosom springs,
And to his heart the world back coiling brings,

that I may quote it also.

An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye :¹

From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling ; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still ;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart ;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air ; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven

¹ *Prelude*, book ii. p. 48.

With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.¹

We do not know the house in the vale of Esthwaite,
where, during his summer vacation,

'mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, he had passed
A night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth ;

but, as it cannot have been far from Hawkshead, his
unequalled description of his return homeward at
early morning, and the effect produced upon him by
the calm and the splendour of the dawn, must be
quoted in this connection.

Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as ere I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
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Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim
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He gives an illustration of this from a weird experience on the hills near Cockermouth, where he was riding with "an ancient servant of his father's house," when a mere child, and "could scarcely hold a bridle." He parted from his guide, dismounted through fear, led his horse over "a rough and stony moor," and came to a "bottom," where, "in former times, a murderer had been hung in iron chains." The monumental letters of his name were carved on the turf; and the boy fled, and saw, as he re-ascended the bare common,

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Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
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I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
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With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
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To God, who thus corrected my desires ;
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 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 That on the line of each of those two roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
 As at a fountain ; and on winter nights,
 Down to this very time, when storm and rain
 Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
 While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
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 Or animate an hour of vacant ease.¹

The precise time of this second experience is easily ascertained from the date of his father's death ; and though the locality is difficult to determine, it must, I think, be one of two places. His father died at Penrith, and it was there that the sons went for their Christmas holiday. The road from Penrith to Hawkshead was by Kirkstone Pass and Ambleside ; and the "led palfreys" sent to carry the boys home would certainly come through the latter town. Now there are only two roads from Ambleside to Hawkshead, which meet at a point about a mile north of Hawkshead, called in the Ordnance map "Outgate." The eastern road is now chiefly used by carriages, being less hilly and better made than the western one, which

¹ *Prelude*, book xii. p. 329.

passes the little public-house at the cross roads, and then joins the coach road between Ambleside and Coniston. The western road is not longer, and would be quite as convenient as the other for horses. Supposing one to walk out from Hawkshead, reach the point at which the roads separate at "Outgate," and then ascend the ridge between them, he would come to several points from which he could overlook *both* roads "far stretched," if his view were not partly intercepted by numerous plantations. Dr. Cradock, to whom I am indebted for this suggestion, thinks that "a point marked in the map as 'High Crag,' between the two roads, and about three-quarters of a mile from their point of divergence, answers the description as well as any other. It may be nearly two miles from Hawkshead, a distance of which an eager, active schoolboy would think nothing. 'The blasted hawthorn,' and 'the naked wall,' are probably things of the past as much as the 'single sheep.'"

Undoubtedly this may be the spot; a green, rocky knoll with a steep face to the north, where a quarry is wrought, and with a plantation to the east. It commands a view of both roads. The other possible place is a crag, not a quarter of a mile from Outgate, a little to the right of the place where the two roads divide. A low wall runs up across it to the top, dividing a plantation of oak, hazel, and ash, from the firs that crown the summit. These firs, which are larch and spruce, seem all of this century. The summit may have been bare when Wordsworth lived at Hawkshead. But at the foot of the path, along the dividing wall, there are a few (possibly older) trees; and a solitary walk beneath them at noon or dusk is almost as solemn and suggestive as repose under the yews of Borrowdale,

listening to the 'mountain flood' on Glaramara. The 'loud dry wind' whistled through the underwood, and moaned amongst the fir-trees, this spring also; and at the summit of the crag there is a very old black-thorn tree. But the same may be said of High Crag, which certainly commands a *further* view of the two roads, it being more than half a mile nearer Ambleside. I entertain no doubt that the precise spot to which the boy Wordsworth climbed on that eventful day, which impressed itself so deeply upon the tablets of his memory, was either one or other of these two crags.

One reason of the difficulty we find in identifying places referred to in *The Prelude*, is due to its having been a posthumous publication. Had Miss Fenwick cross-questioned the poet about *The Prelude*, as she did about the other poems, many obscure allusions would have been cleared up, and much invaluable commentary supplied.

We have another reference to the Hawkshead district in the fine fragment from the same poem, written in Germany in 1797, and first published amongst the *Poems of the Imagination*, though afterwards inserted in *The Prelude*.

There was a Boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander !—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him ; and they would shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes long,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din ; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born ; the grassy churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village school,
And through that churchyard when my way has led
On summer evenings, I believe that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies !¹

The only information we get as to this poem in the I. F. MSS. is the brief intimation, that of all the poet's schoolfellows, one, William Raincock of Rayrigg, took the lead in the art of making a musical instrument of his own fingers ! but whether he is the immortal boy whom the cliffs and islands of Windermere knew so well, and whether it is he who is buried in Hawks-head churchyard, "above the village school," on whose grave the poet used to gaze so absorbedly, cannot even be conjectured. No visitor, however, to that "grassy churchyard" will fail to recall these lines

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 94 ; and *Prelude*, book v. p. 122.

about "the gentle shock of mild surprise," in reference to which Coleridge said, that had he met with them while traversing the deserts of Arabia, he would immediately have shouted out "Wordsworth."

The following seems at first sight to refer to the Hawkshead cottage; but I have been unable to identify the "smooth rock wet with constant springs"—

A diamond light

(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose
Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth
Seated, with open door, often and long
Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,
That made my fancy restless as itself.
'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood :
An entrance now into some magic cave
Or palace built by fairies of the rock ;
Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
The spectacle, by visiting the spot.
Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
By pure imagination ; busy Power
She was, and with her ready pupil turned
Instinctively to human passions, then
Least understood.¹

Nothing corresponding to this can be seen from Anne Tyson's cottage. There is no "copse-clad bank" fronting it, and no "smooth rock wet with constant springs," where the "restless lustre" of the sunlight could give rise to fancies so subtle as those recorded in this passage. I am almost inclined to

¹ *Prelude*, book vii. p. 223.

think that in this passage Wordsworth is referring to what he saw long afterwards on the slopes of Loughrigg or Silver How, from his Grasmere cottage, at sunset. In any case, the way in which the fancy of the boy poet dealt with this "restless lustre," will recall the way in which his maturer imagination worked amongst the yews of Borrowdale.

There is a singularly interesting passage in the same book of *The Prelude*, entitled "Retrospect," in which he quotes and recasts some lines he wrote when a boy at Hawkshead. Every one who knows anything of Wordsworth must remember the *Conclusion of a Poem composed in anticipation of leaving school*. It was written in his sixteenth year, and the extract from it, with which every edition of his poems begins, is as follows :—

Dear native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you.

Thus, while the Sun sinks down to rest
Far in the regions of the west,
Though to the vale no parting beam
Be given, not one memorial gleam,
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills where first he rose.¹

This is recast, in the blank verse of *The Prelude*, thus—

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 1.

A grove there is whose boughs
 Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,
 With lengths of shade so thick that whoso glides
 Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
 As in a cloister. Once—while in that shade
 Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
 Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
 In silent beauty on the naked ridge.
 Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts
 In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart :
 Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
 My mortal course, there will I think on you ;
 Dying, will cast on you a backward look ;
 Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
 Is nowhere touched by one memorial gleam)
 Doth with the fond remains of his last power
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
 On the dear mountain-tops where first they rose.¹

Though the former was the impromptu utterance of a boy of sixteen, some will prefer its fresh simplicity to the new version written in the poet's manhood. The reference to "Thurston-mere" may have puzzled many readers of *The Prelude*, and it is a good illustration of the need of some topographical commentary to the poems. The I. F. note is as follows :—"The image with which this poem concludes suggested itself to me while I was resting in a boat along with my companions, under the shade of a magnificent row of sycamores, which then extended their branches from the shore of the promontory upon which stands the ancient, and at that time more picturesque, Hall of Coniston."² Now there is nothing in the poem definitely to connect "Thurston-mere" with Coniston, though their identity is suggested. I find, however,

¹ *Prelude*, book viii. p. 226. ² *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 4.

that Thurston was the ancient name of Coniston.¹ The site of that grove "on the shore of the promontory" is easily identified, though the grove itself is gone.

Another extract from *The Prelude* may be given here, as it describes a district close at hand, the estuary of the Leven, Morecambe Bay, the ruins of a Roman chapel on a rocky islet, and a characteristic incident in the poet's life, in his twenty-fourth year, shortly after his return to England from his one year's residence in France. The "honoured teacher of his youth" was the Rev. William Taylor, who was buried in Cartmell churchyard, and to visit whose grave the pupil turned aside that morning from his route over the Ulverstone sands—²

O Friend ! few happier moments have been mine
Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
A separate record. Over the smooth sands
Of Leven's ample estuary lay
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
With distant prospect among gleams of sky
And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
In one inseparable glory clad,
Creatures of one ethereal substance met
In consistory, like a diadem
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
Among whose happy fields I had grown up

¹ See Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England*, vol. i. p. 662 ; also the *Edinburgh Gazetteer* (1822), articles "Thurston" and "Coniston."

² *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 38.

From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
Enrapt ; but brightest things are wont to draw
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
As even their pensive influence drew from mine.
How could it otherwise ? for not in vain
That very morning had I turned aside
To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
And on the stone were graven by his desire
Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.
This faithful guide, speaking from his deathbed ;
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
But said to me, " My head will soon lie low ; "
And when I saw the turf that covered him,
After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite. But now
I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
With tender pleasure of the verses graven
Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself :
He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
And rocky island near, a fragment stood
(Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
(With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
Of a dilapidated structure, once
A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
Said matins at the hour that suited those
Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.

Not far from that still ruin all the plain
Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
In loose procession through the shallow stream
Of inland waters ; the great sea meanwhile
Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused
Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
As he approached, no salutation given
In the familiar language of the day,
Cried, " Robespierre is dead !"
Great was my transport, etc.¹

¹ *Prelude*, book x. p. 228.

CHAPTER III.

GRASMERE, ETC.

THE cottage at the Town End of Grasmere, to which Wordsworth came with his sister, in the last days of last century (December 21, 1799), is, even more than Rydal Mount, "identified with his poetic prime." It had once been a public-house, bearing the sign of the Dove and Olive Bough, from which circumstance it was for a long time, and is still occasionally, named 'Dove Cottage.' It is a small two-storied house. "The front of it faces the lake; behind is a small plot of orchard and garden ground, in which there is a spring and rocks; the enclosure shelves upwards towards the woody sides of the mountains above it."¹

This plot of orchard ground is ours;
My trees they are, my sister's flowers.

In a still unpublished poem, he writes thus of his settlement at Grasmere, and of his sister—

On Nature's invitation do I come,
By Reason sanctioned. Can the choice mislead,
That made the calmest, fairest spot on earth,

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 156.

passes the little public-house at the cross roads, and then joins the coach road between Ambleside and Coniston. The western road is not longer, and would be quite as convenient as the other for horses. Supposing one to walk out from Hawkshead, reach the point at which the roads separate at "Outgate," and then ascend the ridge between them, he would come to several points from which he could overlook *both* roads "far stretched," if his view were not partly intercepted by numerous plantations. Dr. Cradock, to whom I am indebted for this suggestion, thinks that "a point marked in the map as 'High Crag,' between the two roads, and about three-quarters of a mile from their point of divergence, answers the description as well as any other. It may be nearly two miles from Hawkshead, a distance of which an eager, active schoolboy would think nothing. 'The blasted hawthorn,' and 'the naked wall,' are probably things of the past as much as the 'single sheep.'"

Undoubtedly this may be the spot; a green, rocky knoll with a steep face to the north, where a quarry is wrought, and with a plantation to the east. It commands a view of both roads. The other possible place is a crag, not a quarter of a mile from Outgate, a little to the right of the place where the two roads divide. A low wall runs up across it to the top, dividing a plantation of oak, hazel, and ash, from the firs that crown the summit. These firs, which are larch and spruce, seem all of this century. The summit may have been bare when Wordsworth lived at Hawkshead. But at the foot of the path, along the dividing wall, there are a few (possibly older) trees; and a solitary walk beneath them at noon or dusk is almost as solemn and suggestive as repose under the yews of Borrowdale,

listening to the 'mountain flood' on Glaramara. The 'loud dry wind' whistled through the underwood, and moaned amongst the fir-trees, this spring also; and at the summit of the crag there is a very old black-thorn tree. But the same may be said of High Crag, which certainly commands a *further* view of the two roads, it being more than half a mile nearer Ambleside. I entertain no doubt that the precise spot to which the boy Wordsworth climbed on that eventful day, which impressed itself so deeply upon the tablets of his memory, was either one or other of these two crags.

One reason of the difficulty we find in identifying places referred to in *The Prelude*, is due to its having been a posthumous publication. Had Miss Fenwick cross-questioned the poet about *The Prelude*, as she did about the other poems, many obscure allusions would have been cleared up, and much invaluable commentary supplied.

We have another reference to the Hawkshead district in the fine fragment from the same poem, written in Germany in 1797, and first published amongst the *Poems of the Imagination*, though afterwards inserted in *The Prelude*.

There was a Boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander !—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him ; and they would shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes long,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din ; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
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Into the bosom of the steady lake.

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Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.

Not far from that still ruin all the plain
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Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
In loose procession through the shallow stream
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Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused
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And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
As he approached, no salutation given
In the familiar language of the day,
Cried, " Robespierre is dead !"
Great was my transport, etc.¹

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CHAPTER III.

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My trees they are, my sister's flowers.

In a still unpublished poem, he writes thus of his settlement at Grasmere, and of his sister—

On Nature's invitation do I come,
By Reason sanctioned. Can the choice mislead,
That made the calmest, fairest spot on earth,

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 156.

With all its unappropriated good,
 My own, and not mine only, for with me
 Entrenched, say rather peacefully embowered,
 A younger orphan of a home extinct,
 The only daughter of my parents, dwells ;
 Ay, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir ;
 Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
 No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.

† Where'er my footsteps turned,
 Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang ;
 The thought of her was like a flash of light
 Or an unseen companionship, a breath,
 A fragrance independent of the wind.

Embrace me then, ye hills, and close me in,
 Now in the clear and open day I feel
 Your guardianship : I take it to my heart :
 'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.
 But I would call thee beautiful ; for mild,
 And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art,
 Dear valley, having in thy face a smile,
 Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased,
 Pleased with thy crags, and woody steep, thy lakes,
 Its one green island, and its winding shores,
 The multitude of little rocky hills,
 Thy church, and cottages of mountain stone,
 Clustered like stars some few, but single meet,
 And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
 Or glancing at each other's cheerful looks,
 Like separated stars with clouds between.¹

¹ See *Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 157, 158. N.B.—*Why* is this poem, the first book of *The Recluse*, still unpublished? Surely the whole of Wordsworth's poetry, and the whole of his sister's journal of their mutual life at Grasmere and elsewhere, should be given to the world without delay.

The above reference to his "sole sister" Dorothy is so exquisite, and hers was a nature so rarely endowed, while their relationship as brother and sister was in many respects unique, that (reserving for another place some remarks upon the influence she wielded over him), I may here quote three other references to her from *The Prelude* which need no commentary :

And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds ;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart ;
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
Perplex her mind ; but, wise as women are
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more ;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved ;
 methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them, and to all creatures.¹

Again—

I turned to abstract science, and there sought
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
Where the disturbances of space and time
... Find no admission. Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good !—

¹ *Prelude*, book xii. p. 323.

That the beloved Sister in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self;
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth ;
And, lastly, ...
Led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with
peace. ¹

Again—

Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul !
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed : and 'tis most true
That later seasons owed to thee no less ;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that unassisted I had marked
In life or nature of those charms minute
That win their way into the heart by stealth,
Still, to the very going-out of youth,
I too exclusively esteemed that love,
And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings,
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness ; but for thee, dear Friend !

¹ *Prelude*, book xi. p. 309.

My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
 In her original self too confident,
 Retained too long a countenance severe :
 A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
 Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests
 And warble in its chambers. At a time
 When Nature, destined to remain so long
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
 Into a second place, pleased to become
 A handmaid to a nobler than herself,
 When every day brought with it some new sense
 Of exquisite regard for common things,
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts
 Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
 Dear Sister ! was a kind of gentler spring
 That went before my steps.¹

With these extracts may be associated some stanzas of his *Farewell* to the cottage at Town End, written when he left it in 1802 to be married to Mary Hutchinson—

Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain-ground,
 Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
 Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
 One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare ;
 Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,
 The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
 Farewell ! we leave thee to Heaven's peaceful care,
 Thee, and the Cottage which thou dost surround.
 Our boat is safely anchored by the shore,
 And there will safely ride when we are gone ;

¹ *Prelude*, book xiv. p. 362.

The flowering shrubs that deck our humble door
Will prosper, though untended and alone :
Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none :
These narrow bounds contain our private store
Of things earth makes, and sun doth shine upon :
Here are they in our sight—we have no more.

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
For two months now in vain we shall be sought ;
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;
Thou like the morning in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the lake we brought,
And placed together near our rocky Well.

We go for One to whom ye will be dear ;
And she will prize this Bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, Building without peer !
—A gentle Maid, whose heart is lowly bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gatherèd,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer,
Will come to you ; to you herself will wed ;
And love the blessed life that we lead here.

Dear Spot ! which we have watched with tender heed,
Bringing these chosen plants and blossoms blown
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed,
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own,
Making all kindness registered and known
Thou for our sakes, though Nature's child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.

O happy Garden ! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours ;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers,

And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers ;
 Two burning months let summer overlead,
 And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
 Into thy bosom we again shall creep.¹

The following is De Quincey's description of this cottage as he saw it in the summer of 1807 :—"A white cottage, with two yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls" (these yews still stand on the eastern side of the cottage). "A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad ; wainscoted from floor to ceiling with dark, polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was, a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and in the summer and autumn with a profusion of jasmine and other shrubs. . . . I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

'Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.'

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and in other respects pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps 300 volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room, and such occasionally it was. But far oftener he both studied, as I found, and composed on the highroad."²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 209.

² "Recollections of the Lakes," pp. 131 and 137 (*Works*, vol. ii. Edition 1862).

The orchard ground behind the cottage, mostly in grass, sloped upwards, with bits of natural rock seen through it, in which some rough stone steps were cut by Wordsworth and a near neighbour of his, John Fisher, to reach an upper terrace, where he built an arbour. It is not much altered since 1800. This short terrace walk is curved, with a sloping bank of grass above, shaded by apple-trees, hazel, laburnum, holly, laurel, and mountain-ash. Below the terrace is the well which supplied the cottage in Wordsworth's time, where rich large-leaved primroses still grow, doubtless the successors of those planted by him and his sister.

Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky ;
And in this bush our sparrow built her nest,
Of which I sang one song that will not die.¹

Above, in the rocks, are the daffodils which they also brought to their 'garden ground;' the Christmas roses which they planted near the well have been removed to the eastern side of the garden, where they flourish luxuriantly. The boxwood planted by the poet grows close to the house. The arbour is gone; and, in the place where it stood, a seat is erected. The hidden brook still sings its under song as it used to do, 'its quiet soul on all bestowing.'

If you listen, all is still,
Save a little neighbouring rill,
That from out the rocky ground
Strikes a solitary sound.²

¹ *The Farewell. Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 210.

² *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 64.

The green linnet warbled in May 1878 as it did more than seventy years ago, in 1803, though the day was overcast, and the 'shadows and sunny glimmerings' were absent. As this poem on *The Green Linnet* gives perhaps the very best idea of the orchard ground, it is quoted in full.

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
 Their snow-white blossoms on my head
 With brightest sunshine round me spread
 Of spring's unclouded weather,
 In this sequestered nook how sweet
 To sit upon my orchard-seat !
 And birds and flowers once more to greet,
 My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
 In all this covert of the blest :
 Hail to Thee, far above the rest
 In joy of voice and pinion !
 Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,
 Presiding Spirit here to-day,
 Dost lead the revels of the May ;
 And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
 Make all one band of paramours,
 Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
 Art sole in thy employment :
 A Life, a Presence like the Air,
 Scattering thy gladness without care
 Too blest with any one to pair ;
 Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
 That twinkle to the gusty breeze,

Behold him perched in ecstasies,
 Yet seeming still to hover ;
 There ! where the flutter of his wings
 Upon his back and body flings
 Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
 That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
 A Brother of the dancing leaves ;
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
 Pours forth his song in gushes ;
 As if by that exulting strain
 He mocked and treated with disdain
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
 While fluttering in the bushes.¹

The second in the first series of the *Miscellaneous Sonnets* also refers to Dove Cottage :—

Well may'st thou halt—and gaze with brightening eye !
 The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook
 Hath stirred thee deeply ; with its own dear brook,
 Its own small pasture almost its own sky !
 But covet not the Abode :—forbear to sigh,
 As many do, repining while they look ;
 Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book
 This precious leaf, with harsh impiety.
 Think what the Home must be if it were thine,
 Even thine, though few thy wants !—Roof, window, door,
 The very flowers are sacred to the Poor,
 The roses to the porch which they entwine :
 Yea, all, that now enchants thee, from the day
 On which it should be touched, would melt away.²

Here, too, in the harbour he watched the *Redbreast*
 chasing the *Butterfly*, on which he wrote the lines,

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 30.

² *Ibid.* p. 261.

Art thou the bird whom Man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English Robin ;
The bird that comes about our doors
When Autumn-winds are sobbing ? etc.¹

and those addressed to *The Kitten and the falling Leaves*, sporting with them as they fell from the lofty elder-tree ; with the description of the blue-cap :—

. blest as bird could be,
Feeding in the apple-tree ;
Making wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out.

In this poem (as in *The Green Linnet*), in dealing with the simplest and most familiar of sights, there is all the fine spiritual sense and unerring imaginative insight of the poet. He knows that

. enjoyments dwell
In the impenetrable cell
Of the silent heart, which Nature
Furnishes to every creature.

He sees that there is “a light of gladness” in the freaks of the kitten ; and that it imparts “a living force” to the countenance of his infant child, and he says :—

I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason,
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 39.

Hours of perfect gladsomeness.
—Pleased by any random toy ;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy ;
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss ;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow wrought,
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.¹

X Here, too, he wrote the stanzas in his pocket copy of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, in which occurs the description of his friend Coleridge, of which Hartley said, that "his father's character and history are preserved in a livelier way than anything that has been written about him."

But the poems that most naturally recur to one's memory, in thinking of Wordsworth as the interpreter of Grasmere, are those *On the naming of Places* ; that exquisite series of seven poems with which the second volume of his works, in the edition I quote from, begins. He says, as an "advertisement" to this series : "By persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown name, where little incidents must have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such incidents, and renew the gratification of such feelings, Names have been given to Places by

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 64.

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While the third, fourth, sixth, and seventh of these "places" are easily identified, I think it possible that the poet did not wish the other three to be known with absolute accuracy. In reference to the second, that entitled "Joanna's Rock," when walking with some friends, and asked to name the spot, he gave an evasive answer. He replied, "Any place that will suit; that as well as any other." They were passing Butterlip How at the time. I cannot think that he made his answer vague, and his note dictated to Miss Fenwick still vaguer, with the view of "puzzling posterity;" but perhaps he did not care to localise everything, and he may have disliked to be cross-examined upon such personal matters.

The first of these *Poems on the naming of Places* is as follows:—

It was an April morning : fresh and clear
 The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,
 Ran with a young man's speed ; and yet the voice
 Of waters which the winter had supplied
 Was softened down into a vernal tone.
 The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
 And hopes and wishes, from all living things
 Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.
 The budding groves seemed eager to urge on
 The steps of June ; as if their various hues
 Were only hindrances that stood between
 Them and their object : but, meanwhile, prevailed
 Such an entire contentment in the air
 That every naked ash, and tardy tree

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 1.

Yet leafless, showed as if the countenance
 With which it looked on this delightful day
 Were native to the summer.—Up the brook
 I roamed in the confusion of my heart,
 Alive to all things and forgetting all.
 At length I to a sudden turning came
 In this continuous glen, where down a rock
 The Stream, so ardent in its course before,
 Sent forth such sallies of glad sound that all
 Which I till then had heard appeared the voice
 Of common pleasure : beast and bird, the lamb,
 The shepherd's dog, the linnet and the thrush
 Vied with this waterfall, and made a song
 Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth
 Or like some natural produce of the air,
 That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here ;
 But 'twas the foliage of the rocks—the birch,
 The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
 With hanging islands of resplendent furze :
 And, on a summit, distant a short space,
 By any who should look beyond the dell,
 A single mountain-cottage might be seen.
 I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
 “ Our thoughts at least are ours ; and this wild nook,
 My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.”
 —Soon did the spot become my other home,
 My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
 And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
 To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
 Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
 Years after we are gone and in our graves,
 When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
 May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL.¹

In reference to it, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick,
 “ This poem was suggested on the banks of the brook

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 1.

that runs through Easdale, which is, in some parts of its course, as wild and beautiful as brook can be. I have composed thousands of verses by the side of it."¹ The brook is therefore Easdale beck. But where is "Emma's Dell"? In the autumn of 1877, Dr. Cradock took me to a place of which he writes, "I have a fancy for a spot just beyond Goody Bridge to the left, where the brook makes a curve and returns to the road two hundred yards farther on. But I have not discovered a trace of authority in favour of the idea, further than that the wooded bend of the brook with the stepping-stones across it, connected with a field-path recently stopped, was a very favourite haunt of Wordsworth's. At the upper part of this bend, near to the place where the brook returns to the road, is a deep pool at the foot of a rush of water. A sad accident occurred there many years ago. A man named Wilson was drowned in the pool. He lived at a house on the hill, called Score Crag, which, if my conjecture as to Emma's Dell is right, is the 'single mountain cottage' on a 'summit, distant a short space.' Wordsworth, happening to be walking at no great distance, heard a loud shriek. It was that of old Wilson, the father, who had just discovered his son's body in the beck."

In the *Reminiscences* of the poet, by the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge,² he tells us of a walk they took up Easdale to this very place, entering the field just at the spot which Dr. Cradock concludes to be "Emma's Dell." "He turned aside at a little farmhouse, and took us into a swelling field, to look down on the tumbling stream which bounded it, and which we saw precipitated at a distance, in a broad white sheet, from the mountain." (This of course refers to

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 29.

² *Ibid.* p. 423.

Easdale Force.) "Then, as he mused for an instant, he said, 'I have often thought what a solemn thing it would be could we have brought to our mind at once all the scenes of distress and misery which any spot, however beautiful and calm before us, has been witness to since the beginning. That water-break, with the glassy quiet pool beneath it, that looks so lovely, and presents no images to the mind but of peace—there, I remember, the only son of his father, a poor man who lived yonder, was drowned.'"¹ This walk and conversation took place in October 1836. If any one is surprised that the poet, if then standing opposite, and looking down into "Emma's Dell" (of which he had said such exquisite things in 1800) did not name it as such to Mr. Coleridge, he must remember that thirty-six years is a long interval, and that in 1836 "his sister Emmeline" had for a year been a confirmed invalid at Rydal. I have repeatedly followed the Easdale beck all the way up from its junction with the Rothay to the Tarn, and found no spot corresponding so closely to the minute realistic detail of this poem as that suggested by Dr. Cradock. There are two places farther up, where "sallies of glad sound" are audible, but they are not at a "sudden turning," as is the spot above Goody Bridge. If one leaves the Easdale road at this bridge, keeps to the side of the beck all the way up for a few hundred yards, till he reaches the "sudden turning," and remembers that this path by the brook was a favourite haunt of Wordsworth and his sister, the likelihood of the above conjecture will almost be flashed upon him, as he recalls and enters into the spirit of the poem. Lady Richardson concurs in this identification of the "dell."

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 431.

Of the next poem in the series, addressed *To Joanna* (Hutchinson), Wordsworth said, "The effect of her laugh is an extravagance, though the effect of the reverberation of voices in some parts of these mountains is very striking. There is in *The Excursion* an allusion to the bleat of a lamb thus rendered and described, without any exaggeration, as I heard it on the side of Stickle Tarn, from the precipice that stretches on to Langdale Pike" (I. F. MSS.)¹ This echo at the foot of Pike o' Stickle is easily found.

Omitting an introductory passage, the poem is as follows :—

While I was seated, now some ten days past
 Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop
 Their ancient neighbour, the old steeple-tower,
 The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by
 Came forth to greet me ; and when he had asked,
 " How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid ;
 And when will she return to us ? " he paused ;
 And, after short exchange of village news,
 He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,
 Reviving obsolete idolatry,
 I, like a Runic Priest, in characters
 Of formidable size had chiselled out
 Some uncouth name upon the native rock,
 Above the Rotha, by the forest-side.
 —Now, by those dear immunities of heart
 Engendered between malice and true love,
 I was not loth to be so catechised,
 And this was my reply :—" As it befel,
 One summer morning we had walked abroad
 At break of day, Joanna and myself.
 —'Twas that delightful season when the broom,

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 29.

Full-flowered, and visible in every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold.
Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks ;
And when we came in front of that tall rock
That eastward looks, I there stopped short—and stood
Tracing the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit ; such delight I found
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,
That intermixture of delicious hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,
In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart.
—When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again ;
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern ; Hammer-scar,
And the tall Steep of Silver-how, sent forth
A noise of laughter ; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone ;
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew
His speaking-trumpet ;—back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice ;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.
—Now whether (said I to our cordial Friend,
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face) this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched
With dreams and visionary impulses
To me alone imparted, sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills
And, while we both were listening, to my side
The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished

To shelter from some object of her fear.
 —And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons
 Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
 Beneath this rock, at sunrise, on a calm
 And silent morning, I sat down, and there,
 In memory of affections old and true,
 I chiselled out in those rude characters
 Joanna's name deep in the living stone :—
 And I, and all who dwell by my fireside,
 Have called the lovely rock, JOANNA'S ROCK."¹

The "lofty firs, that overtop their ancient neighbour, our old steeple tower," refer to the fir-trees near Grasmere church, one of which fell a few years ago, near the Lich-gate, at the north of the churchyard. The "tall rock that eastward looks" by "Rotha's banks," with a "lofty barrier from base to summit," is, I cannot doubt, some portion of Helm Crag. It is clear, however, that there are several deviations from accuracy in the details of this poem. It was written in 1800, and was published that year in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is addressed to Joanna Hutchinson, who is said to have been absent from Grasmere for two years, and Wordsworth says that he carved the Runic characters, *in memoriam*, eighteen months after that summer morning, when he heard the echo of her laugh. But he only took up his residence at Grasmere in 1799. The full effect, however, of this highly imaginative poem is not impaired—it may even be enhanced—by our inability to fix the locality. Can Wordsworth have read Michael Drayton's description of this district?²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 3.

² Which Copeland scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill
 Upon her verge that stands, the neighbouring vallies fill ;

The third poem in this series is as follows:—

There is an Eminence,—of those our hills
 The last that parleys with the setting sun ;
 We can behold it from our orchard-seat ;
 And, when at evening we pursue our walk
 Along the public way, this Peak, so high
 Above us, and so distant in its height,
 Is visible ; and often seems to send
 Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.
 The meteors make of it a favourite haunt :
 The star of Jove, so beautiful and large
 In the mid heavens, is never half so fair
 As when he shines above it. 'Tis in truth
 The loneliest place we have among the clouds.
 And She who dwells with me, whom I have loved
 With such communion that no place on earth
 Can ever be a solitude to me,
 Hath to this lonely Summit given my Name.¹

This is the hill, called "Stone Arthur," which rises to the east of the road from Grasmere up Dunmail Raise, between Green Head Ghyll and Tongue Ghyll.

Helvillon from his height, it through the mountains
 threw,
 From whence as soon again, the sound Dunbalraise drew,
 From whose storm-trofied head, it on the Wendross went,
 Which, tow'rds the sea again, resounded it to Dent,
 That Brodwater, therewith within her banks astound,
 In sailing to the sea, told it to Egremound,
 Whose buildings, walks, and streets, with echoes loud and
 long,
 Did mightily commend old Copeland for her song.

Polyolbion, Song xxx.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 5.

"It is not accurate," Wordsworth himself naïvely said to Miss Fenwick, "that the eminence could be seen from our orchard-seat." It is visible from their garden.

The fourth poem begins thus :—

A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,
A rude and natural causeway, interposed
Between the water and a winding slope
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy :
And there myself and two beloved Friends,
One calm September morning, ere the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun,
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.
—Ill suits the road with one in haste ; but we
Played with our time ; and, as we strolled along,
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore—
Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough,
Each on the other heaped, along the line
Of the dry wreck. And, in our vacant mood,
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm
lake,
Suddenly halting now—a lifeless stand !
And starting off again with freak as sudden ;
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while,
Making report of an invisible breeze
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,
Its playmate, rather say, its moving soul.
—And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair

Hours of perfect gladness.
—Pleased by any random toy ;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
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I would fare like that or this,
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Were only hindrances that stood between
Them and their object : but, meanwhile, prevailed
Such an entire contentment in the air
That every naked ash, and tardy tree

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 1.

To find this pool, I have carefully examined the course of the beck, all the way up to the foot of Rydal Fell. There is a pool beyond the enclosures of the Hall property, when you have ascended about 500 feet above Rydal Mount, which partly corresponds to the description, but there is no wood around it; and the trees which skirt the margin are birch, ash, oak, hazel, but there are no beeches. It is a deep crystal pool, and has a "firm margin" of (artificially placed) stones. It is a short way below some fine specimens of ice-worn rocks, which are to the right of the stream as you ascend it, and above these rocks is a well-marked moraine. The spot referred to in the poem may be either the above, or another (perhaps more likely) within the grounds of the Hall. It is a sequestered nook, beside the third waterfall—which is itself a treble fall. Seen two or three days after rain, when the stream is full enough to break over the whole face of the rock in showers of snowy brightness, yet low enough to show the rock behind its transparent veil, it is inexpressibly lovely. Trees change so much in eighty years, that the absence of "beeches" now would not make this site impossible. Of the circular pool beneath this triple fall it may be said, as Wordsworth describes it,

. . . Both flocks and herds might drink
On its firm margin, even as from a well;

and a "small slip of lawn" might easily have existed there in his time. I cannot be confident of the locality, however. Dr. Cradock writes, "As to Mary Hutchinson's pool, I think that it was not on the beck anywhere, but some detached little pool, far up the hill, to the eastwards of the Hall, in 'the woods.' The description does not well suit any part

of Rydal beck; no spot thereon could long 'remain unknown,' as the brook was until lately much haunted by anglers." My difficulty as to a site "far up the hill" is that it must have been a pool of some size, if "both flocks and herds might drink" all round it; and there is no stream, scarce even a rill, that joins Rydal beck on the right, all the way up from its junction with the Rothay. Mr. Hull writes from Rydal Cottage, "Although closely acquainted with every nook about Rydal Park, I have never been able to discover any spot corresponding to that described in Wordsworth's lines to M. H. It is possible, however, that the 'small bed of water' may have been a temporary rain pool, such as sometimes lodges in the hollows on the mountain-slope after heavy rain." Mr. F. M. Jones, the agent of the Rydal property, writes, "I do not know of any pool of water in the upper Rydal Park. There are some pools up the river, 'Mirror Pool' among them; but I hardly think there can ever have been 'beech trees' growing near them." There are many difficulties; and the place may now be past identification. Possibly Wordsworth's wish may be fulfilled—

The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them.

(But see Preface, p. x, etc.)

The sixth poem is perhaps the most distinctive in the series—

When, to the attractions of the busy world
Preferring studious leisure, I had chosen
A habitation in this peaceful Vale,
Sharp season followed of continual storm
In deepest winter; and, from week to week,
Pathway, and lane, and public road, were clogged

With frequent showers of snow. Upon a hill
At a short distance from my cottage, stands
A stately fir-grove, whither I was wont
To hasten, for I found, beneath the roof
Of that perennial shade, a cloistral place
Of refuge, with an unincumbered floor. .
Here, in safe covert, on the shallow snow,
And, sometimes, on a speck of visible earth,
The redbreast near me hopped ; nor was I loth
To sympathise with vulgar coppice birds,
That, for protection from the nipping blast,
Hither repaired. A single beech-tree grew
Within this grove of firs ! and, on the fork
Of that one beech, appeared a thrush's nest ;
A last year's nest, conspicuously built
At such small elevation from the ground
As gave sure sign that they, who in that house
Of nature and of love had made their home
Amid the fir-trees, all the summer long
Dwelt in a tranquil spot. And oftentimes,
A few sheep, stragglers from some mountain-flock,
Would watch my motions with suspicious stare,
From the remotest outskirts of the grove,—
Some nook where they had made their final stand,
Huddling together from two fears—the fear
Of me and of the storm. Full many an hour
Here did I lose. But in this grove the trees
Had been so thickly planted, and had thriven
In such perplexed and intricate array,
That vainly did I seek beneath their stems
A length of open space, where to and fro
My feet might move without concern or care ;
And, baffled thus, though earth from day to day
Was fettered, and the air by storm disturbed,
I ceased the shelter to frequent,—and prized,
Less than I wished to prize, that calm recess.

The snows dissolved, and genial Spring returned

To clothe the fields with verdure. Other haunts
 Meanwhile were mine ; till, one bright April day,
 By chance retiring from the glare of noon
 To this forsaken covert, there I found
 A hoary pathway traced between the trees,
 And winding on with such an easy line
 Along a natural opening, that I stood
 Much wondering how I could have sought in vain .
 For what was now so obvious. To abide,
 For an allotted interval of ease,
 Under my cottage-roof, had gladly come
 From the wild sea a cherished Visitant ;
 And with the sight of this same path—begun,
 Begun and ended, in the shady grove,
 Pleasant conviction flashed upon my mind
 That, to this opportune recess allured,
 He had surveyed it with a finer eye,
 A heart more wakeful ; and had worn the track
 By pacing here, unwearied and alone,
 In that habitual restlessness of foot,
 That haunts the Sailor measuring o'er and o'er
 His short domain upon the vessel's deck,
 While she pursues her course through the dreary sea.

When thou hadst quitted Esthwaite's pleasant shore,
 And taken thy first leave of those green hills
 And rocks that were the play-ground of thy youth,
 Year followed year, my Brother ! and we two,
 Conversing not, knew little in what mould
 Each other's mind was fashioned ; and at length
 When once again we met in Grasmere Vale,
 Between us there was little other bond
 Than common feelings of fraternal love.
 But thou, a School-boy, to the sea hadst carried
 Undying recollections ; Nature there
 Was with thee ; she, who loved us both, she still
 Was with thee ; and even so didst thou become

A *silent* Poet ; from the solitude
Of the vast sea didst bring a watchful heart
Still couchant, an inevitable ear,
And an eye practised like a blind man's touch.
—Back to the joyless Ocean thou art gone ;
Nor from this vestige of this musing hour
Could I withhold thy honoured name,—and now
I love the fir-grove with a perfect love.
Thither do I withdraw when cloudless suns
Shine hot, or wind blows troublesome and strong ;
And there I sit at evening, when the steep
Of Silver-how, and Grasmere's peaceful lake,
And one green island, gleam between the stems
Of the dark firs, a visionary scene !
And, while I gaze upon the spectacle
Of clouded splendour, on this dream-like sight
Of solemn loveliness, I think on thee,
My Brother, and on all which thou hast lost.
Nor seldom, if I rightly guess, while Thou,
Muttering the verses which I muttered first
Among the mountains, through the midnight watch
Art pacing thoughtfully the vessel's deck
In some far region, here, while o'er my head,
At every impulse of the moving breeze,
The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound,
Alone I tread this path ;—for aught I know,
Timing my steps to thine : and, with a store
Of undistinguishable sympathies,
Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale.¹

This fir-grove is between the Wishing-gate and White Moss Common, and almost exactly opposite the former. Follow the old road from Grasmere to Rydal to the point where the paths diverge, one leading up to the common, the other to the Gate ; take the

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 9.

latter a short way, and turn to the left by the first path leading along the hillside by a wall, and the "fir-grove" will be seen on the right; or, standing at the Wishing-gate and looking eastward, the grove is to the left, not forty yards from the gate. Some of the firs (Scotch) are still there, and several beech-trees, not "a *single* beech-tree" as in the poem. Dr. Cradock assures me that Wordsworth pointed out the special beech-tree, in which was the thrush's nest, "to Miss Cookson and others, a few days before Dora Wordsworth's death. The wall was in a ruined plight, and the party scrambled through it. The tree is near the upper wall, and from its shape tells its own tale." "The plantation," Wordsworth remarks in his note on this poem, "has been walled in, and is not so accessible as when my brother John wore the path in the manner here described. The grove was a favourite haunt with us all, while we lived at Town End"¹ (I. F. MSS.) They used to call it Brother's Grove or John's Grove. It can be easily entered by a gate, about a hundred yards beyond the Wishing-gate as one goes towards Rydal. The view from it, so exquisitely described in the poem, is much interfered with by larch plantations immediately below the firs. In the absence of definite testimony, I would have supposed that the path which his brother trod faced Silver-How, and the island of Grasmere; and that the beech-tree was nearer the lower than the upper wall, just above a cup-shaped depression in the ground. But Miss Cookson's statement is explicit. Only fifteen firs survive at this part of the grove, which is open and desolate. Dr. Cradock remarks, "As to there being more than one beech, Wordsworth would not have hesitated to sacrifice servile exactness to poetical effect. He had a fancy for 'one.'"

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 30.

'Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.'

'One abode, no more.' Grasmere's 'one green island,' 'one green field.' And again, the cattle, 'forty feeding like one.'"

The following is the last of the *Poems on the Naming of Places* :—

Forth from a jutting ridge, around whose base
Winds our deep Vale, two heath-clad Rocks ascend
In fellowship, the loftiest of the pair
Rising to no ambitious height ; yet both,
O'er lake and stream, mountain and flowery mead,
Unfolding prospects fair as human eyes
Ever beheld. Up-led with mutual help,
To one or other brow of those twin Peaks
Were two adventurous Sisters wont to climb,
And took no note of the hour while thence they gazed,
The blooming heath their couch, gazed, side by side,
In speechless admiration. I, a witness
And frequent sharer of their calm delight
With thankful heart, to either Eminence
Gave the baptismal name each Sister bore.
Now are they parted, far as Death's cold hand
Hath power to part the Spirits of those who love
As they did love. Ye kindred Pinnacles—
That, while the generations of mankind
Follow each other to their hiding-place
In time's abyss, are privileged to endure
Beautiful in yourselves, and richly graced
With like command of beauty—grant your aid
For MARY'S humble, SARAH'S silent, claim,
That their pure joy in nature may survive
From age to age in blended memory.¹

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 12.

These two rocks are near the "fir-grove," and easily identified. They are "heath-clad" still. They rise out of what is sometimes called the Bane Riggs Wood; so named, I understand, because the shortest road from Ambleside to Grasmere passes through it; "bane" or "bain" signifying, in the Westmoreland dialect, a short cut. Dr. Cradock says, "They are difficult of approach, being enclosed in a wood, with dense undergrowth, and surrounded by a high well-built wall. They can be well seen from the lower highroad, from a spot close to the three-mile stone from Ambleside. They are some fifty or sixty feet above the road, about twenty yards apart, and separated by a slight depression of say ten feet. The view from the easterly one is now much preferable, as it is less encumbered with shrubs; and, for that reason also is more heath-clad. The twin rocks are also well seen, though at a further distance, from the hill on White Moss Common, between the roads 'Old Corruption' and 'Bit-by-bit Reform.' Doubtless the rocks were far more easily approached fifty years ago, when walls, if any, were low and ill-built. It is probable, however, that even then they were enclosed and protected;—for heath will not grow on the Grasmere hills in places much frequented by sheep." From the lower carriage road,—Dr. Arnold's 'Radical Reform,'—they are best seen at a point two or three yards to the west of a large rock on the roadside near the milestone. The view of them from Loughrigg Terrace is also interesting.

The poems on *The Wishing-gate*, and *The Wishing-gate Destroyed*, are too well known to be quoted in full. But the opening stanzas of the first poem, with Wordsworth's prefatory note, are as follows :—

In the vale of Grasmere, by the side of the old high-way leading to Ambleside, is a gate, which, time out of mind, has been called the Wishing-gate, from a belief that wishes formed or indulged there have a favourable issue.

Hope rules a land for ever green :
All powers that serve the bright-eyed Queen
Are confident and gay ;
Clouds at her bidding disappear
Points she to aught?—the bliss draws near,
And Fancy smooths the way.

Not such the land of Wishes—there
Dwell fruitless day-dreams, lawless prayer,
And thoughts with things at strife ;
Yet how forlorn, should *ye* depart,
Ye superstitions of the *heart*,
How poor, were human life !

When magic lore abjured its might,
Ye did not forfeit one dear right,
One tender claim abate ;
Witness this symbol of your sway,
Surviving near the public way,
The rustic Wishing-gate !

Inquire not if the faery race
Shed kindly influence on the place,
Ere northward they retired ;
If here a warrior left a spell,
Panting for glory as he fell ;
Or here a saint expired.

Enough that all around is fair,
Composed with Nature's finest care,
And in her fondest love—
Peace to embosom and content—
To overawe the turbulent,
The selfish to reprove.

Yea ! even the Stranger from afar,
Reclining on this moss-grown bar,
Unknowing, and unknown,
The infection of the ground partakes,
Longing for his Beloved—who makes
All happiness her own.¹

The second poem begins thus :—

'Tis gone—with old belief and dream
That round it clung, and tempting scheme
Released from fear and doubt ;
And the bright landscape too must lie,
By this blank wall, from every eye,
Relentlessly shut out.

Bear witness ye who seldom passed
That opening—but a look ye cast
Upon the lake below,
What spirit-stirring power it gained
From faith which here was entertained,
Though reason might say no.

Blest is that ground, where, o'er the springs
Of history, Glory claps her wings,
Fame sheds the exulting tear ;
Yet earth is wide, and many a nook
Unheard of is, like this, a book
For modest meanings dear.

It was in sooth a happy thought
That grafted, on so fair a spot,
So confident a token
Of coming good ;—the charm is fled ;
Indulgent centuries spun a thread,
Which one harsh day has broken.²

A gate, though not the “moss-grown bar” of

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 188. ² *Ibid.* p. 190.

Wordsworth's time, still stands at the old place, where he tells us one had stood "time out of mind." Long may it stand, defying wind and weather.

The poem which follows this one, in the series entitled *Poems of the Imagination*, is so characteristic that I insert it in full. It is called *The Primrose of the Rock*. "This rock," says Wordsworth, "stands on the right hand, a little way leading up the vale from Rydal to Grasmere" (I. F. MSS.)¹ "We have been in the habit of calling it the Glow-worm Rock, from the number of glow-worms we have often seen hanging on it as described. The tuft of primroses, has, I fear, been washed away by heavy rains."

A rock there is whose homely front
The passing traveller slights :
Yet there the glow-worms hang their lamps,
Like stars, at various heights ;
And one coy Primrose to that Rock
The vernal breeze invites.

What hideous warfare hath been waged,
What kingdoms overthrown,
Since first I spied that Primrose-tuft
And marked it for my own ;
A lasting link in Nature's chain
From highest heaven let down !

The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
Their fellowship renew ;
The stems are faithful to the root,
That worketh out of view :

¹ Note to Centenary Edition of the Poems, 1870. The version of the I. F. MSS. given in the *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 48, reverses it—"from Grasmere to Rydal." How many persons has this error misled ?

And to the rock the root adheres
In every fibre true.

Close clings to earth the living rock,
Though threatening still to fall ;
The earth is constant to her sphere :
And God upholds them all :
So blooms this lonely Plant, nor dreads,
Her annual funeral.

Here closed the meditative strain ;
But air breathed soft that day,
The hoary mountain-heights were cheered,
The sunny vale looked gay ;
And to the Primrose of the Rock
I gave this after-lay.

I sang—Let myriads of bright flowers,
Like Thee, in field and grove
Revive unenvied :—mightier far,
Than tremblings that reprove
Our vernal tendencies to hope,
Is God's redeeming love :

That love which changed—for wan disease,
For sorrow that had bent
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
To types beneficent.

Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
The reasoning Sons of Men,
From one oblivious winter called
Shall rise, and breathe again ;
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten.

To humbleness of heart descends
 This prescience from on high,
 The faith that elevates the just,
 Before and when they die ;
 And makes each soul a separate heaven,
 A court for Deity.¹

The primrose has disappeared, and the glow-worms have almost deserted the place, but the rock is unmistakable ; and it is one of the most interesting of the verifiable reminiscences of Wordsworth. The poem is one of the profoundest and most imaginative in the series.

It was at the quarry, hard by 'the primrose rock,' that Wordsworth met *The Beggars*, on whom he wrote two poems ; in the second of which (composed many years afterwards) the following lines occur :—

They met me in a genial hour,
 When universal nature breathed
 As with the breath of one sweet flower,—
 A time to overrule the power
 Of discontent, and check the birth
 Of thoughts with better thoughts at strife,
 The most familiar bane of life
 Since parting Innocence bequeathed
 Mortality to Earth !
 Soft clouds, the whitest of the year,
 Sailed through the sky—the brooks ran clear ;
 The lambs from rock to rock were bounding ;
 With songs the budded groves resounding ;
 And to my heart are still endeared
 The thoughts with which it then was cheered.²

Returning to Grasmere by either road, almost every turn brings up some fresh suggestion of the poet. It

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 193.

² *Ibid.* p. 111, etc.

was near the Wishing-gate that he met *The Sailor's Mother*.

X
Majestic in her person, tall and straight ;
And like a Roman matron's was her mien and gait.
The ancient spirit is not dead ;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there ;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair :
She begged an alms, like one in poor estate.¹

The Vale of Grasmere is, as De Quincey remarked, "solitary, yet sowed, as it were, with a thin diffusion of humble dwellings,—here a scattering, and there a clustering, as in the starry heavens."² It was a few hundred yards from his cottage in Grasmere that Wordsworth met the old leech-gatherer, immortalised in the poem entitled *Resolution and Independence*.³ The "pool bare to the eye of heaven," on the margin of which

X
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call ;
And moveth altogether if it move at all,

must be the pool on White Moss Common.

Coming down to the side of the lake, there was a grove at the north-eastern end—in great measure destroyed by the new highroad along the side of the water—in which he composed two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*. The character of Leonard in the former poem is in large part drawn from that of his brother John (who also supplied him with some material for *The Character of the Happy Warrior*).

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 239.

² *Recollections of the Lakes*, p. 124.

³ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. 124.

The story arose out of a fact mentioned to him at Ennerdale, that a shepherd had fallen asleep at the top of *The Pillar*, and perished by falling over the rock.

Of *Michael*, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick, "The sheepfold remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town End. The name of the Evening Star was not given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley more to the north" (I. F. MSS.)¹ There is a sheepfold above Boon Beck, when you first enter the common going up Green-head Ghyll, which is now "finished," and is used when required. There are remains of walling much higher up the Ghyll, but they are probably the work of miners who were engaged there.

The poem begins thus :—

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen ; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude ;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 27.

Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones ;
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved ;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where there was occupation and abode.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone ; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
“The winds are now devising work for me !”
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains : he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts,
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed

The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed ; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;
 Which, like a book, preserved the memory
 Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
 The certainty of honourable gain ;
 Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—
 had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.

Michael's home is thus described :—

Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
 Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
 High into Easdale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
 And westward to the village near the lake ;
 And from this constant light, so regular
 And so far seen, the House itself, by all
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
 Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

This cottage was gone when the poem was written in 1800. It stood where the coach-house and stables of "The Hollins" now stand. It is easy for any one visiting Green-head Ghyll to realise Michael in his old age, as described in that most pathetic of poems.

Among the rocks
 He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
 And listened to the wind ; and, as before,
 Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
 And for the land, his small inheritance.

And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need.

Of his cottage it is said—

The ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood :—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door ; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.¹

The island in Grasmere Lake is frequently referred to in the poems ; notably in the series of *Inscriptions* in the fifth volume. Number five in that series was “written with a pencil upon a stone in the wall of the house (an outhouse) on the island of Grasmere.”

Thou see'st a homely Pile, yet to these walls
The heifer comes in the snow-storm, and here
The new-dropped lamb finds shelter from the wind.
And hither does one Poet sometimes row
His pinnacle, a small vagrant barge, up-piled
With plenteous store of heath and withered fern,
(A lading which he with his sickle cuts,
Among the mountains) and beneath this roof
He makes his summer couch, and here at noon
Spreads out his limbs, while, yet unshorn, the Sheep,
Panting beneath the burthen of their wool,
Lie round him, even as if they were a part
Of his own Household : nor, while from his bed
He looks, through the open door-place, toward the lake
And to the stirring breezes, does he want
Creations lovely as the work of sleep—
Fair sights and visions of romantic joy !²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 267.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 61.

On the western shore of the lake, Wyke Cottage may be seen, where Sarah Mackereth lived,—*The Westmoreland Girl*, nine years of age, who plunged into the torrent and rescued a lamb when it was being swept into the lake, child and lamb being carried together some distance by the flood,—and who was the heroine of a poem written by Wordsworth for his grandchildren. The beck is that which descends from the centre of Silver How. This picturesque cottage with round chimney,—a yew-tree and Scotch fir behind it,—is on the western side of the road from Grasmere over to Langdale by Red Bank. The Mackereths are a well-known Westmoreland family. They belong to the “gentry of the soil,” and have been parish clerks in Grasmere for generations. One of them was the tenant of the Swan Inn, referred to in *The Waggoner*, the “host” who painted, with his own hand, “the famous swan” used as a sign. They have been in the district, I am informed, for several hundred years.

Allan Bank, the house in which Wordsworth lived for four years—from the spring of 1807, when he left Dove Cottage, till the spring of 1811, when he removed to the parsonage at Grasmere—is chiefly interesting as the place where most of *The Excursion* was composed. The house is much altered and added to since the poet's time. He was its first occupant. The grounds command fine views of Loughrigg and Silver How, with the lake below, as well as of the valley northwards towards Dunmail-Raise; but, somehow, Allan Bank is not associated with Wordsworth, as Dove Cottage, or Rydal, or Hawkshead are. He has written nothing which leads us to think of it as in any way interesting to himself.

Loughrigg Tarn, on the southern slope of Lough-

rigg Fell, is described in Wordsworth's book on the lakes, and also in his *Epistle to Sir George Beaumont*,¹ written in the year 1811, which records the first part of a journey taken by the poet's household from Grasmere to Bootle by the Sea for the benefit of the children ; a composition which Wordsworth thought very little of. He never sent it to Sir George, ranking it in merit along with his tragedy of *The Borderers*.

Ere the welcome dawn
 Had from the east her silver star withdrawn,
 The Wain stood ready, at our Cottage-door,
 Thoughtfully freighted with a various store ;
 And long or e'er the uprising of the Sun
 O'er dew-damped dust our journey was begun,
 A needful journey, under favouring skies,
 Through peopled Vales ; yet something in the guise
 Of those old Patriarchs when from well to well
 They roamed through Wastes where now the tented
 Arabs dwell.

Thus gladdened from our own dear Vale we pass
 And soon approach Diana's Looking-glass !
 To Loughrigg-tarn, round clear and bright as heaven,
 Such name Italian fancy would have given,
 Ere on its banks the few grey cabins rose
 That yet disturb not its concealed repose
 More than the feeblest wind that idly blows.

Ah, Beaumont ! when an opening in the road
 Stopped me at once by charm of what it showed,
 The encircling region vividly exprest
 Within the mirror's depth, a world at rest—
 Sky streaked with purple, grove and craggy *bield*,
 And the smooth green of many a pendent field,

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 6.

And, quieted and soothed, a torrent small,
A little daring would-be waterfall,
One chimney smoking and its azure wreath,
Associate all in the calm Pool beneath,
With here and there a faint imperfect gleam
Of water-lilies veiled in misty steam—
What wonder at this hour of stillness deep,
A shadowy link 'tween wakefulness and sleep,
When Nature's self, amid such blending, seems
To render visible her own soft dreams,
If, mixed with what appeared of rock, lawn, wood,
Fondly embosomed in the tranquil flood,
A glimpse I caught of that Abode, by Thee
Designed to rise in humbly privacy,
A lowly Dwelling, here to be outspread,
Like a small Hamlet, with its bashful head
Half hid in native trees. Alas 'tis not,
Nor ever was ; I sighed, and left the spot
Unconscious of its own untoward lot,
And thought in silence, with regret too keen,
Of unexperienced joys that might have been ;
Of neighbourhood and intermingling arts,
And golden summer days uniting cheerful hearts.
But time, irrevocable time, is flown,
And let us utter thanks for blessings sown
And reaped—what hath been, and what is, our own.

The reference in these concluding lines is to Sir George Beaumont's purchase of the Tarn, with the view of building a residence there. I shall quote what Wordsworth says of the subsequent sale of this property, because it leads him to speak of those yew-trees in Grasmere, one of which now shelters his own grave. The extracts are taken from the I. F. MSS. "The project of building was given up, Sir George retaining possession of the Tarn. Many years afterwards a Kendal trades-

man, born upon its banks, applied to me for the purchase of it, and accordingly it was sold for the sum that had been given for it, and the money laid out, under my direction, upon a substantial oak fence for a certain number of yew-trees to be planted in Grasmere churchyard. Two were planted in each enclosure (and principally, if not entirely, by my own hand) with a view to remove, after a certain time, the one which threw the least. After several years, the stouter plant being left, the others were taken up and planted in other parts of the same churchyard, and were adequately fenced. The whole eight are now thriving, and are an ornament to a place which, during late years, has lost much of its rustic simplicity by the introduction of iron palisades to fence off family burying-grounds, and, by numerous ornaments, some of them in very bad taste, from which this place of burial was in my memory quite free; see the lines in the sixth book of *The Excursion* beginning 'Green is the churchyard'" (I. F. MSS.) "May the trees be taken care of hereafter, when we are all gone; and some of them will perhaps, at some far distant time, rival the majesty of the yew of Lorton, and those which I have described as growing at Borrowdale, where they are still to be seen in grand assemblage."¹

The note appended to the sequel of this poem, composed thirty years afterwards, is to the following effect:—"Loughrigg Tarn, alluded to in the foregoing epistle, resembles, though much smaller in compass, the Lake Nemi, or *Speculum Dianæ*, as it is often called, not only in its clear waters and circular form, and the beauty immediately surrounding it, but also as being overlooked by the eminence of Langdale

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 376; also *Prose Works*, vol. iii. pp. 177, 202.

Pikes, as Lake Nemi is by that of Monte Calvo. Since this epistle was written, Loughrigg Tarn has lost much of its beauty by the felling of many natural clumps of wood, relics of the old forest, particularly upon the farm called 'The Oaks,' from the abundance of that tree which grew there. It is to be regretted, upon public grounds, that Sir George Beaumont did not carry into effect his intention of constructing here a Summer Retreat, in the style I have described, as his taste would have set an example *how buildings with all the accommodations modern society require might be introduced even into the most secluded parts of the country without injuring their native character.*"¹ Few persons of ordinarily cultivated taste will not share in this regret, when they see the many modern erections at Grasmere and Ambleside, which, by the hardness of their lines, and their general obtrusiveness, interfere with the seclusion of these places, and jar with the whole spirit of the district. Wordsworth's reference to the yew-trees leads us naturally back to Grasmere and its churchyard.

The "church" in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth himself tells us, is that of Grasmere. Several of its features are, however, taken from other places, such as Bowness, and (perhaps?) Hawkshead. The "churchyard among the mountains" is mainly that of Grasmere, though some of the graves described are elsewhere,—*e.g.* that of the "gentle dalesman," who was deaf.

He grew up
From year to year in loneliness of soul,
And this deep mountain-valley was to him
Soundless, with all its streams.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 9.

His grave is in the churchyard at Hawes Water. In his account of the scene and the characters in *The Excursion*, dictated to Miss Fenwick, Wordsworth refers to the house at Hackett, which he converted into the parsonage, and proceeds: "At the same time, and as by the waving of a magic wand, I turn the comparatively confined vale of Langdale into the stately and comparatively spacious vale of Grasmere, and its ancient parish church."¹

—So we descend : and winding round a rock
Attain a point that showed the valley—stretched
In length before us ; and, not distant far,
Upon a rising-ground a grey church tower,
Whose battlements were screened by tufted trees.
And towards a crystal Mere, that lay beyond
Among steep hills and woods embosomed, flowed
A copious stream with boldly-winding course ;
Here traceable, there hidden—there again
To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.
On the stream's bank, and everywhere appeared
Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots ;
Some scattered o'er the level, others perched
On the hill sides, a cheerful quiet scene,
Now in its morning purity arrayed.²

"The interior of the church has been improved lately by underdrawing the roof and raising the floor ; but the rude and antique majesty of its former appearance has been impaired by painting the rafters ; and the oak benches, with a simple rail at the back dividing them from each other, have given way to seats that have more the appearance of pews."³

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.

² *Excursion. Poetical Works*, vol. vi. p. 141.

³ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 201.

Oft pausing, we pursued our way ;
Nor reached the village-churchyard till the sun,
Travelling at steadier pace than ours, had risen
Above the summits of the highest hills,
And round our path darted oppressive beams.

As chanced, the portals of the sacred Pile
Stood open ; and we entered. On my frame,
At such transition from the fervid air,
A grateful coolness fell, that seemed to strike
The heart, in concert with that temperate awe
And natural reverence with the place inspired.
Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,
But large and massy ; for duration built ;
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld
By naked rafters intricately crossed,
Like leafless underboughs, in some thick wood,
All withered by the depth of shade above.
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,
Each in its ornamental scroll inclosed ;
Each also crowned with winged heads—a pair
Of rudely-painted Cherubim. The floor
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged
In seemly rows ; the chancel only showed
Some vain distinctions, marks of earthly state
By immemorial privilege allowed ;
Though with the Encincture's special sanctity
But ill according. An heraldic shield,
Varying its tincture with the changeful light,
Imbued the altar-window ; fixed aloft
A faded hatchment hung, and one by time
Yet undiscoloured. A capacious pew
Of sculptured oak stood here, with drapery lined ;
And marble monuments were here displayed
Thronging the walls ; and on the floor beneath

Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven
And foot-worn epitaphs.¹

All these are in Grasmere church as described, the "naked rafters intricately crossed," the "admonitory texts" "each in its ornamental scroll enclosed," the "oaken benches," the "heraldic shield" in the "altar window," the "faded hatchment," the "marble monuments," and "sepulchral stones, with foot-worn epitaphs." The wanderer, the solitary, and Wordsworth withdraw from the church to

a spot

Where sun and shade were intermixed ; for there
A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms
From an adjoining pasture, overhung
Small space of that green churchyard with a light
And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall
My ancient Friend and I together took
Our seats.²

An oak now grows in the field, a little to the east of the churchyard wall, which cannot, however, be that to which Wordsworth refers. Probably an oak then grew beside the wall above the Rothay. While the three are seated together on that wall, the village pastor is represented as joining them. All this is ideal, the rector of Grasmere being at that time insane ; and Mr. Rowlandson, the curate, being incapable of any "elevated discourse," whether on things human or divine. The character of the pastor is gathered, Wordsworth tells us, from that of several individuals : notably from the Rev. Mr. Walker of Seathwaite, "the wonderful Walker."

The dramatic structure of *The Excursion* is so

¹ *Excursion*. *Poetical Works*, vol. vi. p. 142.

² *Excursion*, book v. p. 145.

defective, that it is extremely difficult to follow the changes of place ; and, for the main purpose which Wordsworth had in view, this is unnecessary. Nevertheless, there is more order in the development of the narrative, than is sometimes supposed. The group of meditative talkers are first supposed to be seated on the moss-grown wall to the *east* of the churchyard, facing Silver How. This I infer from the reference to Wray Ghyll beck (*infra*, p. 92), and from the way in which the pastor describes the graves in the churchyard if seen in April, after snow had fallen, and if approached from the north. I quote this passage, though it is more prosaic than the rest, as a clue to the identification of places :—

. Human life
Is either fair and tempting, a soft scene
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,
Or a forbidden tract of cheerless view,
Even as the same is looked at, or approached.
Thus, when in changeful April fields are white
With new-fallen snow, if from the sullen north
Your walk conduct you hither, ere the sun
Hath gained his noontide height, this churchyard, filled
With mounds transversely lying side by side
From east to west, before you will appear
An unilluminated, blank, and dreary plain,
With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom
Saddening the heart. Go forward, and look back ;
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light,
Of life, of love, and gladness doth dispense
His beams ; which, unexcluded in their fall,
Upon the southern side of every grave
Have gently exercised a melting power ;
Then will a vernal prospect greet your eye,
All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright

Hopeful and cheerful :—vanished is the pall
That overspread and chilled the sacred turf,
Vanished or hidden ; and the whole domain,
To some, too lightly minded, might appear
A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.¹

From the next quotation it will be seen that Wordsworth's description of the place is wonderfully true to Grasmere and its surroundings. Thus the pastor is represented as saying to the group seated on the wall—

You behold,

High on the breast of yon dark mountain, dark
With stony barrenness, a shining speck
Bright as a sunbeam sleeping till a shower
Brush it away, or cloud pass over it ;
And such it might be deemed—a sleeping sunbeam ;
But 'tis a plot of cultivated ground,
Cut off, an island in the dusky waste ;
And that attractive brightness is its own.
The lofty side, by nature framed to tempt
Amid a wilderness of rocks and stones
The tiller's hand, a hermit might have chosen,
For opportunity presented thence
Far forth to send his wandering eye o'er land
And ocean, and look down upon the works,
The habitations, and the ways of men,
Himself unseen ! But no tradition tells
That ever hermit dipped his maple dish
In the sweet spring that lurks 'mid yon green fields ;
And no such visionary views belong
To those who occupy and till the ground,
High on that mountain where they long have dwelt
A wedded pair in childless solitude.
A house of stones collected on the spot,

¹ *Excursion*, book v. p. 153.

By rude hands built, with rocky knolls in front,
Backed also by a ledge of rock, whose crest
Of birch-trees waves over the chimney top.¹

The mountain is Silver How. It is impossible to say where was the "house of stones collected on the spot," or "the spring," or the shining plot of cultivated ground, "the sleeping sunbeam." They may have been real, or they may have been merely ideal creations. The I. F. notes contain no hint. But one of the next references to locality occurring in *The Excursion* is an unmistakable allusion to the Wray Ghyll Force, which descends between Silver How and Easdale—

The soft voice
Of yon white torrent falling down the rock,
Speaks less distinctly to the same effect.²

No other white torrent falling down rocks is visible from the churchyard of Grasmere. This one is distinctly seen when looking towards Silver How to the west.

The group who carry on high argument on the deep questions raised in *The Excursion*, are afterwards supposed to leave the "moss-grown wall:"

The vicar paused, and toward a seat advanced,
A long stone seat, fixed in the churchyard wall ;
Part shaded by cool sycamore, and part
Offering a sunny resting place. . . .
Beneath the shade we all sat down.³ . . .

This "long stone seat" was fixed to the wall on the left of the south entrance-gate into the churchyard ; and not, as might be supposed, on the opposite

¹ *Excursion*, book v. p. 157. ² *Ibid.* book vi. p. 185.

³ *Ibid.* book vi. p. 192.

wall, which runs down from the poet's grave towards the bridge.

Of the "decorated pillar," with the "dial," in the churchyard, mentioned in the same book,¹ there is no trace or tradition at Grasmere. There is, however, a pillar in Bowness churchyard on which a dial used to stand.

The clergyman described in the seventh book is the Rev. Joseph Sympson of Wytheburn, whose household were for many years the principal associates of the Wordsworth family in Grasmere. The L. F. MSS. tell us that all that is said of them in the poem is "as faithful to the truth as words can make it."²

The vicar is addressing the others in the group, and he says,

—Once more look forth, and follow with your sight
The length of road that from yon mountain's base
Through bare enclosures stretches, 'till its line
Is lost within a little tuft of trees ;
Then, reappearing in a moment quits
The cultured fields : and up the heathy waste,
Mounts, as you see, in mazes serpentine,
Led towards an easy outlet of the vale.
That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,
By which the road is hidden, also hides
A cottage from our view ; though I discern
(Ye scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees
The smokeless chimney-top.—

All unembowered

And naked stood that lowly Parsonage
(For such in truth it is, and appertains

¹ *Excursion*, book vi. p. 185.

² *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 207.

Before the greedy visiting was closed,
And the long privileged house left empty—swept
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague
Had been among them ; all was gentle death,
One after one, with intervals of peace.
A happy consummation ! an accord
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for ! save that here
Was something which to mortal sense might sound
Like harshness,—that the old grey-headed Sire,
The oldest, he was taken last, survived
When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,
His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,
His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

“ All gone, all vanished ! he deprived and bare,
How will he face the remnant of his life ?
What will become of him ? ” we said, and mused
In sad conjectures—“ Shall we meet him now
Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks ?
Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,
Striving to entertain the lonely hours
With music ! ” (for he had not ceased to touch
The harp or viol which himself had framed,
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill).
“ What titles will he keep ? will he remain
Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,
A planter, and a rearer from the seed ?
A man of hope and forward-looking mind
Even to the last ! ”—Such was he, unsubdued.
But Heaven was gracious ; yet a little while,
And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng
Of open projects, and his inward hoard
Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay

For noontide solace on the summer grass,
 The warm lap of his mother earth : and so,
 Their lenient term of separation past,
 That family (whose graves you there behold)
 By yet a higher privilege once more
 Were gathered to each other.¹

Old Mr. Simpson was found dead in his garden on the opposite side of the road from the cottage, just as described above. He died in 1807, in his ninety-second year. There is now a new door into the garden, but the posts are old enough to have been there in Simpson's time. The house is one of the most easily identified of all the places mentioned in *The Excursion*. The "blue slabs of mountain stone," which are common to all old houses in the vale, are there, just as they were while the old pastor lived, and Wordsworth was his frequent guest. The windows too "by shutters weather-fended," are described with curiously minute fidelity. The details as to the fiddle and the love of planting, which I have not quoted, are from life ; so are the references to the fruit trees in his garden, and to the interval between his wife's death and his own. She was twelve years his junior.

She, far behind him in the vale of years,
 and she predeceased him by a year and a half.

Not twice had summer, etc.

I mention these details to show how faithful to fact Wordsworth usually was ; and to justify, to any who may think otherwise, the probability of equal faithfulness in his allusion to other places. The "little

Excursion, book vii. p. 214.

tuft of trees " (sycamores) still shelters the old dwelling on the north. Though no longer its parsonage, the house still belongs to Wytheburn church.

The Sympsons are buried in Grasmere. Their gravestone stands about ten yards north-west from that of their poet, not far from the monument erected in memory of Arthur Hugh Clough. There is only one stone, a low one, with a pointed top.

The following is the inscription on it :—" Here lie the remains of the Reverend Jos. Sympson, Minister of Wytheburn for more than 50 years. He died June 27, 1807, aged 92 ; also of Mary, his wife, who died Jan. 24, 1806, aged 81 ; also of Eliz. Jane, their youngest Dr., who died Sep. 11, 1801, aged 37."

Their graves are thus described :

These grassy heaps lie amicably close,
Like surges heaving in the wind
Along the surface of a mountain pool :
Five graves, and only five, that rise together
Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching
On the smooth playground of the village school.¹

For the same reason as that already mentioned, this very exact reference to the playground of the village school should be noted. It is described as 'smooth' because it had no graves in it at that time. "The school," says Dr. Cradock, "was then and long afterwards held in the house abutting the Lich-gate, and the children had no playground except the churchyard. The portion of the ground nearest the school was not used for burial, until the want of room made it necessary to 'encroach' on it. The oldest tombstone bears the date 1777."

¹ *Excursion*, book vii. p. 208.

Wordsworth thus describes the churchyard :—

Green is the Church-yard, beautiful and green,
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge,
A heaving surface, almost wholly free
From interruption of sepulchral stones,
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf
And everlasting flowers. These Dalesmen trust
The lingering gleam of their departed lives
To oral record, and the silent heart ;
Depositories faithful and more kind
Than fondest epitaph.¹

That it was "almost wholly free from interruption of sepulchral stones," was literally true in Wordsworth's time. Dr. Cradock says, "I cannot count more than two or three gravestones of earlier date than 1800. Most of the others are of a much more recent date."

On the passage in Book VII. of *The Excursion*, beginning

"Now from the living pass we once again,"²

he remarks—

"This portion relates to the Greens, a very ancient Grasmere family, settled for generations at Pavement End, which, with a considerable tract of land, is still their property. The poet describes them as dwelling at Goldrill side, and I had been told that the name was a pure invention to avoid the realism of 'Grasmere' or 'Pavement End.' Such, however, is not exactly the case. On inquiry from Mr. Fleming Green, one of the family, now residing elsewhere in Grasmere, I find that a small stream, to which Wordsworth himself, from some fancy of his own, had given the name of Goldrill, ran formerly by the road-

¹ *Excursion*, book vi. p. 188.

² *Ibid.* book vii. p. 224.

side, and then turned by the side of the farm at Pavement End towards the lake. When the road was reconstructed the rill was covered, and can no more be seen there; but it issues freely from a culvert at the back of the premises, and runs by the hedge-side to the lake. Mr. Fleming Green remembers the rill as it was, and pointed out its course to me. He is a son of one of the 'seven' lusty sons' mentioned in the poem. He said, 'We stuck to the old house till we could no longer stand up in it.' He is one of a race, well termed 'lusty.' The 'hoary grandsire' and many of his descendants lie buried in a long row a little to the left of the path leading from the church to the lichgate at the north. Among them is little Margaret (her name and age not unrecorded), but her 'daisied hillock three spans long' is now merged in the larger graves of her more aged kindred."

In a corner of this churchyard Wordsworth himself is buried. One who visited the place last year writes, "To lie under the mound on which the shadow of that grey tower falls, seems scarcely like a banishment from life, only a deeper sleep, in a home quieter but not less lovely than those which surround the margin of the lake. Voices of children come up from the village street, with the hum of rustic life. From sunny heights the lowing of cattle is heard, and the bleat of the sheep that pasture on the hill-sides. And by day and night unceasingly, the Rotha, hurrying past the churchyard wall, mingles the babble of its waters with the soft *susurrus* of the breeze, that plays among the sheltering sycamores and yews."—(M. C. T.) The daisy, of which he wrote so much, has its "place upon its poet's grave;" seeming there, if anywhere, to have a "function apostolical."

¹ Mr. Fleming Green would read "six."

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind, and Byron's force ;
But when will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave
O Rotha, with thy living wave,
Sing him thy best ! for few or none
Hear thy voice right, now he is gone.¹

Matthew Arnold.

William Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, their daughter Dora (Mrs. Quillinan), and their children who died in infancy, lie together under the shade of one of the yew-trees which the poet planted. Earth contains few spots more peaceful or more sacred. It is a fitter resting-place for the dust of William Wordsworth, than a corner in Westminster Abbey would have been.

There is another poem associated in a significant way with the vale of Grasmere. It is entitled (expressively if cumbrously), "Lines composed at Grasmere one evening, after a stormy day, the author having just read in a newspaper that the dissolution of Mr. Fox was hourly expected."²

Loud is the Vale ! the Voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams !
Of all her Voices, One !

Loud is the Vale ;—this inland Depth
In peace is roaring like the Sea ;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

¹ *Memorial Verses. Poems*, vol. ii. p. 224. Macmillan 1877.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 134.

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A Power is passing from the earth
 To breathless Nature's dark abyss ;
 But when the great and good depart
 What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
 Doth yet again to God return?—
 Such ebb and flow must ever be,
 Then wherefore should we mourn?

The southern side of Grasmere suggests the last book of *The Excursion*, the "Discourse of the Wanderer, and an evening visit to the Lake." In the eighth book, entitled "The Parsonage," Wordsworth leaves Grasmere, and imaginatively goes back to Langdale. He tells us, in the I. F. notes, that towards the head of Little Langdale "stands embowered, or partly shaded by yews and other trees, something between a cottage and a mansion or gentleman's house, such as they once were in this country. This I convert into the Parsonage . . . and upon the side of Loughrigg Fell, at the foot of Grasmere Lake, and looking down upon it and the whole vale with its accompanying mountains, the 'Pastor' is supposed by me to stand, when at sunset he addresses his companions."¹ Again, "The point fixed in my imagination is half-way up the northern side of Loughrigg Fell."² Dr. Cradock says, "The lake is, of course, in the main, that of Grasmere, 'the grassy mountain's open side' being avowedly Loughrigg terrace. But, according to Wordsworth's habit, he has drawn his imagery from various other places,—e.g. the island of Grasmere is not 'with birch trees fringed.' (This may well refer to Rydal.) Again, I know of no 'lilies

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.

² *Ibid.* p. 210.

of the vale' at Grasmere, but they are found, I believe, on one of the islands of Windermere, certainly in woods near the river Leven, below that lake. Again, the vicar refers to 'two islands' on the lake, Grasmere having only one. I never saw a goat 'browsing by dashing waterfalls,' still less 'spotted deer,' on or near Grasmere. The latter may be seen at Ullswater." I have found it impossible to trace an order in the combinations, or to separate and detach the local elements combined in this last book. The discourse is first carried on in the house of the vicar, the parsonage in Langdale; and, though it is a momentary digression, I may remark that, in that noble passage in which Age is likened to "a final Eminence," the "high peaks that bound the vale where now we are," seem much more appropriate to Langdale than to Grasmere.

Rightly is it said
That Man descends into the VALE of years ;
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,
And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,
As of a final EMINENCE ; though bare
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point
On which 'tis not impossible to sit
In awful sovereignty ; a place of power,
A throne, that may be likened unto his
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks
Down from a mountain-top,—say one of those
High peaks that bound the vale where now we are.
Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye,
Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,
With all the shapes over their surface spread :
But, while the gross and visible frame of things
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,
Yea almost on the Mind herself, and seems

All unsubstantialised,—how loud the voice
Of waters, with invigorated peal
From the full river in the vale below,
Ascending ! For on that superior height
Who sits is disencumbered from the press
Of near obstructions, and is privileged
To breathe in solitude, above the host
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves
Many and idle, visits not his ear :
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these),
By which the finer passages of sense
Are occupied ; and the Soul, that would incline
To listen, is prevented or deterred.¹

But after leaving the parsonage (whence they can see beyond 'the silvery lake' 'streaked with placid blue,'

As if preparing for the peace of evening), they descend along a streamlet to a bridge where they see a ram reflected in the water ; then they go into a boat, and sail to "the rocky isle with birch trees fringed." This cannot be near Langdale, nor is it Grasmere. It might be Rydal, and all that follows would suit Rydal Mere, even to the "dashing waterfall" (with or without the "goats!") which might very well be a cascade on the beck that descends between Whitmoss Common and Nab Scar ; and the party might ascend Loughrigg terrace later on, and proceed to a point whence they could view Grasmere Vale. But after the discourse of the Wanderer they all return to the vicar's house in Langdale, whence the "Solitary" makes his way up to Blea Tarn, and his cell. This adds to the difficulty of

¹ *Excursion*, book ix. p. 260.

localisation. It is evidently an ideal picture, formed out of many particulars, which I do not attempt to particularise. It will be enough to quote a few descriptive passages :

Forth we went,
And down the vale along the streamlet's edge
Pursued our way, a broken company,
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.
Thus having reached a bridge, that overarched
The hasty rivulet where it lay becalmed ,
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw
A two-fold image ; on a grassy bank
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood
Another and the same ! Most beautiful,
On the green turf, with his imperial front
Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb,
The breathing creature stood ; as beautiful
Beneath him, showed his shadowy counterpart.
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
And each seemed centre of his own fair world :
Antipodes unconscious of each other,
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight !¹

"Turn where we may," said I, "we cannot err
In this delicious region."—Cultured slopes,
Wild tracts of forest-ground, and scattered groves,
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,
Surrounded us ; and, as we held our way
Along the level of the glassy flood,
They ceased not to surround us ; change of place,
From kindred features diversely combined,
Producing change of beauty ever new.²

¹ *Excursion*, book ix. p. 271.

² *Ibid.* p. 273.

Before the greedy visiting was closed,
And the long privileged house left empty—swept
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague
Had been among them ; all was gentle death,
One after one, with intervals of peace.
A happy consummation ! an accord
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for ! save that here
Was something which to mortal sense might sound
Like harshness,—that the old grey-headed Sire,
The oldest, he was taken last, survived
When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,
His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,
His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

“ All gone, all vanished ! he deprived and bare,
How will he face the remnant of his life ?
What will become of him ? ” we said, and mused
In sad conjectures—“ Shall we meet him now
Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks ?
Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,
Striving to entertain the lonely hours
With music ! ” (for he had not ceased to touch
The harp or viol which himself had framed,
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill).
“ What titles will he keep ? will he remain
Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,
A planter, and a rearer from the seed ?
A man of hope and forward-looking mind
Even to the last ! ”—Such was he, unsubdued.
But Heaven was gracious ; yet a little while,
And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng
Of open projects, and his inward hoard
Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay

For noontide solace on the summer grass,
 The warm lap of his mother earth : and so,
 Their lenient term of separation past,
 That family (whose graves you there behold)
 By yet a higher privilege once more
 Were gathered to each other.¹

Old Mr. Sympson was found dead in his garden on the opposite side of the road from the cottage, just as described above. He died in 1807, in his ninety-second year. There is now a new door into the garden, but the posts are old enough to have been there in Sympson's time. The house is one of the most easily identified of all the places mentioned in *The Excursion*. The "blue slabs of mountain stone," which are common to all old houses in the vale, are there, just as they were while the old pastor lived, and Wordsworth was his frequent guest. The windows too "by shutters weather-fended," are described with curiously minute fidelity. The details as to the fiddle and the love of planting, which I have not quoted, are from life ; so are the references to the fruit trees in his garden, and to the interval between his wife's death and his own. She was twelve years his junior.

She, far behind him in the vale of years,
 and she predeceased him by a year and a half.

Not twice had summer, etc.

I mention these details to show how faithful to fact Wordsworth usually was ; and to justify, to any who may think otherwise, the probability of equal faithfulness in his allusion to other places. The "little

Excursion, book vii. p. 214.

tuft of trees" (sycamores) still shelters the old dwelling on the north. Though no longer its parsonage, the house still belongs to Wytheburn church.

The Sympsons are buried in Grasmere. Their gravestone stands about ten yards north-west from that of their poet, not far from the monument erected in memory of Arthur Hugh Clough. There is only one stone, a low one, with a pointed top.

The following is the inscription on it :—"Here lie the remains of the Reverend Jos. Sympson, Minister of Wytheburn for more than 50 years. He died June 27, 1807, aged 92; also of Mary, his wife, who died Jan. 24, 1806, aged 81; also of Eliz. Jane, their youngest Dr., who died Sep. 11, 1801, aged 37."

Their graves are thus described :

These grassy heaps lie amicably close,
 Like surges heaving in the wind
 Along the surface of a mountain pool :
 Five graves, and only five, that rise together
 Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching
 On the smooth playground of the village school.¹

For the same reason as that already mentioned, this very exact reference to the playground of the village school should be noted. It is described as 'smooth' because it had no graves in it at that time. "The school," says Dr. Cradock, "was then and long afterwards held in the house abutting the Lich-gate, and the children had no playground except the churchyard. The portion of the ground nearest the school was not used for burial, until the want of room made it necessary to 'encroach' on it. The oldest tombstone bears the date 1777."

¹ *Excursion*, book vii. p. 208.

Wordsworth thus describes the churchyard :—

Green is the Church-yard, beautiful and green,
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge,
A heaving surface, almost wholly free
From interruption of sepulchral stones,
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf
And everlasting flowers. These Dalesmen trust
The lingering gleam of their departed lives
To oral record, and the silent heart ;
Depositories faithful and more kind
Than fondest epitaph.¹

That it was "almost wholly free from interruption of sepulchral stones," was literally true in Wordsworth's time. Dr. Cradock says; "I cannot count more than two or three gravestones of earlier date than 1800. Most of the others are of a much more recent date."

On the passage in Book VII. of *The Excursion*, beginning

"Now from the living pass we once again,"²

he remarks—

"This portion relates to the Greens, a very ancient Grasmere family, settled for generations at Pavement End, which, with a considerable tract of land, is still their property. The poet describes them as dwelling at Goldrill side, and I had been told that the name was a pure invention to avoid the realism of 'Grasmere' or 'Pavement End.' Such, however, is not exactly the case. On inquiry from Mr. Fleming Green, one of the family, now residing elsewhere in Grasmere, I find that a small stream, to which Wordsworth himself, from some fancy of his own, had given the name of Goldrill, ran formerly by the road-

¹ *Excursion*, book vi. p. 188. ² *Ibid.* book vii. p. 224.

side, and then turned by the side of the farm at Pavement End towards the lake. When the road was reconstructed the rill was covered, and can no more be seen there; but it issues freely from a culvert at the back of the premises, and runs by the hedge-side to the lake. Mr. Fleming Green remembers the rill as it was, and pointed out its course to me. He is a son of one of the 'seven¹ lusty sons' mentioned in the poem. He said, 'We stuck to the old house till we could no longer stand up in it.' He is one of a race, well termed 'lusty.' The 'hoary grandsire' and many of his descendants lie buried in a long row a little to the left of the path leading from the church to the lichgate at the north. Among them is little Margaret (her name and age not unrecorded), but her 'daisied hillock three spans long' is now merged in the larger graves of her more aged kindred."

In a corner of this churchyard Wordsworth himself is buried. One who visited the place last year writes, "To lie under the mound on which the shadow of that grey tower falls, seems scarcely like a banishment from life, only a deeper sleep, in a home quieter but not less lovely than those which surround the margin of the lake. Voices of children come up from the village street, with the hum of rustic life. From sunny heights the lowing of cattle is heard, and the bleat of the sheep that pasture on the hill-sides. And by day and night unceasingly, the Rotha, hurrying past the churchyard wall, mingles the babble of its waters with the soft *susurrus* of the breeze, that plays among the sheltering sycamores and yews."—(M. C. T.) The daisy, of which he wrote so much, has its "place upon its poet's grave;" seeming there, if anywhere, to have a "function apostolical."

¹ Mr. Fleming Green would read "six."

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind, and Byron's force ;
But when will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave
O Rotha, with thy living wave,
Sing him thy best ! for few or none
Hear thy voice right, now he is gone.¹

Matthew Arnold.

William Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, their daughter Dora (Mrs. Quillinan), and their children who died in infancy, lie together under the shade of one of the yew-trees which the poet planted. Earth contains few spots more peaceful or more sacred. It is a fitter resting-place for the dust of William Wordsworth, than a corner in Westminster Abbey would have been.

There is another poem associated in a significant way with the vale of Grasmere. It is entitled (expressively if cumbrously), "Lines composed at Grasmere one evening, after a stormy day, the author having just read in a newspaper that the dissolution of Mr. Fox was hourly expected."²

Loud is the Vale ! the Voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams !
Of all her Voices, One !

Loud is the Vale ;—this inland Depth
In peace is roaring like the Sea ;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

¹ *Memorial Verses. Poems*, vol. ii. p. 224. Macmillan.
1877.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 134.

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A Power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss ;
But when the great and good depart
What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?—
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?

The southern side of Grasmere suggests the last book of *The Excursion*, the "Discourse of the Wanderer, and an evening visit to the Lake." In the eighth book, entitled "The Parsonage," Wordsworth leaves Grasmere, and imaginatively goes back to Langdale. He tells us, in the I. F. notes, that towards the head of Little Langdale "stands embowered, or partly shaded by yews and other trees, something between a cottage and a mansion or gentleman's house, such as they once were in this country. This I convert into the Parsonage . . . and upon the side of Loughrigg Fell, at the foot of Grasmere Lake, and looking down upon it and the whole vale with its accompanying mountains, the 'Pastor' is supposed by me to stand, when at sunset he addresses his companions."¹ Again, "The point fixed in my imagination is half-way up the northern side of Loughrigg Fell."² Dr. Cradock says, "The lake is, of course, in the main, that of Grasmere, 'the grassy mountain's open side' being avowedly Loughrigg terrace. But, according to Wordsworth's habit, he has drawn his imagery from various other places,—e.g. the island of Grasmere is not 'with birch trees fringed.' (This may well refer to Rydal.) Again, I know of no 'lilies

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.² *Ibid.* p. 210.

of the vale' at Grasmere, but they are found, I believe, on one of the islands of Windermere, certainly in woods near the river Leven, below that lake. Again, the vicar refers to 'two islands' on the lake, Grasmere having only one. I never saw a goat 'browsing by dashing waterfalls,' still less 'spotted deer,' on or near Grasmere. The latter may be seen at Ullswater." I have found it impossible to trace an order in the combinations, or to separate and detach the local elements combined in this last book. The discourse is first carried on in the house of the vicar, the parsonage in Langdale; and, though it is a momentary digression, I may remark that, in that noble passage in which Age is likened to "a final Eminence," the "high peaks that bound the vale where now we are," seem much more appropriate to Langdale than to Grasmere.

Rightly is it said
That Man descends into the VALE of years ;
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,
And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,
As of a final EMINENCE ; though bare
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point
On which 'tis not impossible to sit
In awful sovereignty ; a place of power,
A throne, that may be likened unto his
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks
Down from a mountain-top,—say one of those
High peaks that bound the vale where now we are.
Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye,
Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,
With all the shapes over their surface spread :
But, while the gross and visible frame of things
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,
Yea almost on the Mind herself, and seems

All unsubstantialised,—how loud the voice
Of waters, with invigorated peal
From the full river in the vale below,
Ascending ! For on that superior height
Who sits is disencumbered from the press
Of near obstructions, and is privileged
To breathe in solitude, above the host
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves
Many and idle, visits not his ear :
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these),
By which the finer passages of sense
Are occupied ; and the Soul, that would incline
To listen, is prevented or deterred.¹

But after leaving the parsonage (whence they can see beyond 'the silvery lake' 'streaked with placid blue,'

As if preparing for the peace of evening), they descend along a streamlet to a bridge where they see a ram reflected in the water ; then they go into a boat, and sail to "the rocky isle with birch trees fringed." This cannot be near Langdale, nor is it Grasmere. It might be Rydal, and all that follows would suit Rydal Mere, even to the "dashing waterfall" (with or without the "goats!") which might very well be a cascade on the beck that descends between Whitmoss Common and Nab Scar ; and the party might ascend Loughrigg terrace later on, and proceed to a point whence they could view Grasmere Vale. But after the discourse of the Wanderer they all return to the vicar's house in Langdale, whence the "Solitary" makes his way up to Blea Tarn, and his cell. This adds to the difficulty of

¹ *Excursion*, book ix. p. 260.

localisation. It is evidently an ideal picture, formed out of many particulars, which I do not attempt to particularise. It will be enough to quote a few descriptive passages :

— Forth we went,
And down the vale along the streamlet's edge
Pursued our way, a broken company,
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.
Thus having reached a bridge, that overarched
The hasty rivulet where it lay becalmed ,
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw
A two-fold image ; on a grassy bank
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood
Another and the same ! Most beautiful,
On the green turf, with his imperial front
Shaggy and bold, and wreathèd horns superb,
The breathing creature stood ; as beautiful
Beneath him, showed his shadowy counterpart.
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
And each seemed centre of his own fair world :
Antipodes unconscious of each other,
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight !¹

"Turn where we may," said I, "we cannot err
In this delicious region."—Cultured slopes,
Wild tracts of forest-ground, and scattered groves,
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,
Surrounded us ; and, as we held our way
Along the level of the glassy flood,
They ceased not to surround us ; change of place,
From kindred features diversely combined,
Producing change of beauty ever new.²

¹ *Excursion*, book ix. p. 271.

² *Ibid.* p. 273.

Alert to follow as the Pastor led,
We clomb a green hill's side ; and, as we clomb,
The Valley, opening out her bosom, gave
Fair prospect, intercepted less and less,
O'er the flat meadows and indented coast
Of the smooth lake, in compass seen :—far off,
And yet conspicuous, stood the old Church-tower,
In majesty presiding over fields
And habitations seemingly preserved
From all intrusion of the restless world
By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

Soft heath this elevated spot supplied,
And choice of moss-clad stones, whereon we couched
Or sate reclined ; admiring quietly
The general aspect of the scene ; but each
Not seldom over anxious to make known
His own discoveries ; or to favourite points
Directing notice, merely from a wish
To impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.
That rapturous moment never shall I forget
When these particular interests were effaced
From every mind !—Already had the sun,
Sinking with less than ordinary state,
Attained his western bound ; but rays of light—
Now suddenly diverging from the orb
Retired behind the mountain tops or veiled
By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown
Of the blue firmament—aloft, and wide :
And multitudes of little floating clouds,
Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,
Who saw, of change were conscious—had become
Vivid as fire ; clouds separately poised,—
Innumerable multitude of forms
Scattered through half the circle of the sky ;
And giving back, and shedding eath on each,
With prodigal communion, the bright hues

Which from the unapparent fount of glory
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep
Repeated ; but with unity sublime !

While from the grassy mountain's open side
We gazed, in silence hushed, with eyes intent
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,
The Priest in holy transport thus exclaimed.¹

(Then follows the concluding apostrophe, etc.)

As the seventh of the *Evening Voluntaries*² refers to Grasmere, a stanza from it may also be quoted. The "oak-crowned hill" may be a peak in the Easdale direction, or it may be *Hammerscar*. It is to the Silver How group that he is referring.

The leaves that rustled on this oak-crowned hill,
And sky that danced among those leaves, are still ;
Rest smooths the way for sleep ; in field and bower
Soft shades and dews have shed their blended power
On drooping eyelid and the closing flower ;
Sound is there none at which the faintest heart
Might leap, the weakest nerve of superstition start ;
Save when the Owlet's unexpected scream
Pierces the ethereal vault ; and ('mid the gleam
Of unsubstantial imagery, the dream,
From the hushed vale's realities, transferred
To the still lake) the imaginative Bird
Seems, 'mid inverted mountains, not unheard.

I have already remarked that Easdale valley is associated with the freshest and most productive period of Wordsworth's genius. It would be hard to say whether the terrace walk at Lancrigg, or the upper

¹ *Excursion*, book ix. p. 274.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 131.

road from Grasmere to Rydal, is more closely identified with him. Walking with Lady Richardson on that terrace in December 1843, he said, "This is a striking anniversary to me, for this day forty-four years ago my sister and I took up our abode at Grasmere, and three days after we found out this walk, which long remained our favourite haunt."¹ Lady Richardson adds, "It was their custom to spend the fine days of summer in the open air, chiefly in the valley of Easdale. *The Prelude* was chiefly composed in a green mountain terrace, on the Easdale side of Helm Crag, known by the name of Under Lancrigg, a place which he used to say he knew by heart. The ladies sat at their work on the hill-side while he walked to and fro, on the smooth green mountain turf, humming out his verses to himself, and then repeating them to his sympathising and ready scribes, to be noted down on the spot, and transcribed at home."²

This small mountain farm of Lancrigg belonged at that time to an old statesman, Rowlandson by name. He was afterwards obliged to part with it, in consequence of the imprudence of his son, and in 1840 he sold it to Mrs. Fletcher, the mother of the present proprietor, Lady Richardson. The poet Wordsworth acted as agent in the transaction, his daughter Dora being the clerk who transcribed the legal documents. It is now one of the loveliest spots in the Lake District. Lady Richardson, when on a visit at Fox How in 1839, made the following allusion to Lancrigg:—"On consulting Mr.

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 439.

² "William Wordsworth," by Lady Richardson, from *Sharpe's London Magazine*, 1851, p. 8. One of the best reviews of the *Memoirs*, and one of the most discriminating estimates of the poet that have ever been written.

Wordsworth about the beautiful little farm of Lancrigg (now for sale), in Easdale, he entered into the subject most kindly, and offered to find out for me its real value. He described the tangled copse, and a natural terrace under the crag, a very favourite resort of his and his sister's in bygone days, and said of the little 'Rocky Well,' 'I know it by heart.' He then asked Mrs. Wordsworth to look at his Miscellaneous Sonnets and read the one suggested to him by the likeness of a rock to a sepulchral stone in that hazel copse. This she did with much expression."¹ This well, of purest and coolest water, is at the base of a Rock, in delicious shade, where in May time the sorrel and the primrose are of the largest size and the most brilliant green. It is a spring more beautiful than the "Nab Well" at Rydal, cooler than Brownrigg on Helvellyn. The path leading westwards from it, shaded by rich and varied underwood, is the "natural terrace" where Wordsworth used to spend these long summer days with his household, in fellowship with Nature, and in the pure delights of poetic labour. No one who has understood *The Prelude*, with its profound vision of the Universe and of Human Life, will walk for the first time along this terrace, where it was chiefly composed, without emotion. Midway is that moss-grown stone described in the sonnet, to which Lady Richardson refers.

Mark the concentrated hazels that enclose
Yon old grey Stone, protected from the ray
Of noontide suns :—and even the beams that play
And glance, while wantonly the rough wind blows,
Are seldom free to touch the moss that grows

¹ *Autobiography of Mrs. Fletcher*, p. 244. Third Edition. Edinburgh: 1876.

Upon that roof, amid embowering gloom,
The very image framing of a tomb,
In which some ancient Chieftain finds repose
Among the lonely mountains.—Live, ye trees !
And thou, grey Stone, the pensive likeness keep
Of a dark chamber where the Mighty sleep :
For more than Fancy to the influence bends
When solitary Nature condescends
To mimic Time's forlorn humanities.¹

Of this sonnet, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick, "suggested in the wild hazel wood at the foot of Helm Crag, where the stone still lies, with others of like form and character, though much of the wood that veiled it from the glare of day has been felled."² A few paces farther west on this walk, where the path opens, is the spot alluded to above ; where Dorothy Wordsworth used to sit with her tablets, while her brother paced up and down composing his verses, and then dictating them to his devoted amanuensis, while Mrs. Wordsworth read, and the children played around.

Referring to a visit of Wordsworth's to Lancrigg in 1840, Lady Richardson says,³ "We all walked over the intack part of Lancrigg to our boundary wall, and to the point the poet especially admires, as commanding the wild mountain view into Far Easdale on one side, and the more cultivated part in the vale of Grasmere on the other, with the church-tower, the lake, and the end of Loughrigg as the boundary, which is a kind of sundial from that point of view. We went through the West Copse, which led us to Far Easdale, and back to Thorney How, by the flat part of the valley which goes by the name

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 283.

² *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 57. ³ *Autobiography*, p. 248.

of Boothwaite, a favourite evening stroll of the poet." In a note—June 1878—she adds, "The view was much better then (in 1840) than now, as, owing to the growth of the trees, much is taken from that point, and the character of the sundial lost. He liked the contrast of view, the wildness of Far Easdale on the one side, and the church-tower and village scene on the other."

Still more interesting is the record of a visit made by the poet to Lancrigg in 1841. "We took a walk on the terrace, and he went as usual to his favourite points. On our return he was struck with the berries on the holly-tree, and said, 'Why should not you and I go and pull some berries from the other side of the tree, which is not seen from the window? and then we can go and plant them in the rocky ground behind the house.' We pulled the berries, and set forth with our tools: I made the holes, and the poet put in the berries. He was as earnest and eager about it, as if it had been a matter of importance; and as he put the seeds in, he every now and then muttered, in his low solemn tone, that beautiful verse from Burns's *Vision* :—

'And wear thou this, she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head.
The polished leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.'

"He clambered to the highest rocks in the 'Tom Intak,' and put in the berries in such situations as Nature sometimes does, with such true and beautiful effect. He said, 'I like to do this for posterity.

Some people are selfish enough to say, What has posterity done for me? But the past has done much for us."¹ Lady Richardson pointed out these hollies to me this year. They are in various places along the terrace. May they live 'for posterity.' Wordsworth asked her to preserve this terrace path in its natural state, as it was in his day; and she has done so. She pointed out a small group of oak-trees in the flat of Easdale, like an island in the green meadow, to which Wordsworth had often called her attention. "Watch your shrubs well," he said, "that they may not prevent the sight of that clump of oaks; for they give a great character to the view."

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 438; or *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 436.

CHAPTER IV.

HELVELLYN, ULLSWATER, ETC.

IN tracing out the places mentioned by Wordsworth, it seems a natural course, after leaving Grasmere, to go over to Paterdale by the Grisdale Hawes, and to return to Rydal by Kirkstone.

The places in the Ullswater district associated with the poet are best approached by the road from Grasmere to Helvellyn, leading past Grisdale Tarn. This path up Tongue Ghyll, so often taken by Wordsworth and his friends, is, on many grounds, the most interesting of the routes to Helvellyn. The way in which the mountains open up, and the valleys seem to deepen as you ascend, is striking; and the view to the west and south, from the rocks on the side of Seat Sandal, just above the Tongue Ghyll waterfall, is specially fine. Ascending Tongue Ghyll to Grisdale Hawes, the passage at the beginning of the eighth book of *The Prelude* will occur to many:

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green?

They hold a rustic fair—a festival,

Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.¹

Few of the tarns in the Lake District are more impressive than Grisdale, in its loneliness and seclusion. The following stanza in reference to it is by another poet, and a man of rare endowments (the late Frederick Faber), of whom Wordsworth said, "He had not only as good an eye for Nature as I have, but a better one, and sometimes pointed out to me effects on the mountains which I had never detected."²

Father Faber says that if he wished "to build himself a hermitage,"

In yon pale hollow would I dwell,
Where waveless Grisdale meekly lies,
And the three clefts of grassy fell
Let in the blueness of the skies ;
And lowland sounds come travelling up
To echo in that mountain cup.

Where from the tarn the shallow brook
By rough Helvellyn shapes its way,
The window of my cell should look
Eastward upon the birth of day, etc.³

This is the exact spot where the parting took place

¹ *Prelude*, book viii. p. 207.

² See "*Recollections of Wordsworth*", by Aubrey De Vere. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 488.

³ *Poems*, lxxxviii. p. 250. Third Edition. 1857.

between the brothers William and John Wordsworth, and where the poet afterwards composed the following elegiac stanzas.

[I have the less scruple in quoting the above lines, as, with all their excellence, they heighten by contrast the effect of the stanzas which follow. The work of such a man as Faber, compared with Wordsworth's, shows how rare it is, in interpreting Nature, to reach the point where perfect simplicity and supreme insight go hand in hand.]

ELEGIAC VERSES,

IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER, JOHN WORDSWORTH, COMMANDER OF THE E. I. COMPANY'S SHIP, THE *EARL OF ABERGAVENNY*, IN WHICH HE PERISHED BY CALAMITOUS SHIPWRECK, FEB. 6TH, 1805.

Composed near the Mountain track, that leads from Grasmere through
Grisdale Hawes, where it descends towards Patterdale.

1805.

I.

The Sheep-boy whistled loud, and lo !
That instant, startled by the shock,
The Buzzard mounted from the rock
Deliberate and slow :
Lord of the air, he took his flight ;
Oh ! could he on that woeful night
Have lent his wing, my Brother dear,
For one poor moment's space to Thee,
And all who struggled with the Sea,
When safety was so near.

II.

Thus in the weakness of my heart
I spoke (but let that pang be still)

When rising from the rock at will,
I saw the Bird depart.
And let me calmly bless the Power
That meets me in this unknown Flower,
Affecting type of him I mourn !
With calmness suffer and believe,
And grieve, and know that I must grieve,
Not cheerless, though forlorn.

III.

Here did we stop ; and here looked round
While each into himself descends,
For that last thought of parting Friends
That is not to be found.
Hidden was Grasmere Vale from sight,
Our home and his, his heart's delight,
His quiet heart's selected home.
But time before him melts away,
And he hath feeling of a day
Of blessedness to come.

IV.

Full soon in sorrow did I weep,
Taught that the mutual hope was dust,
In sorrow, but for higher trust,
How miserably deep !
All vanished in a single word,
A breath, a sound, and scarcely heard.
Sea—Ship—drowned—Shipwreck—so it came
The meek, the brave, the good, was gone ;
He who had been our living John
Was nothing but a name.

V.

That was indeed a parting ! oh,
Glad am I, glad that it is past ;

For there were some on whom it cast
Unutterable woe.
But they as well as I have gains ;—
From many a humble source, to pains
Like these, there comes a mild release ;
Even here I feel it, even this Plant
Is in its beauty ministrant
To comfort and to peace.

VI.

He would have loved thy modest grace,
Meek Flower ! To Him I would have said,
“ It grows upon its native bed
Beside our Parting-place ;
There, cleaving to the ground it lies
With multitude of purple eyes,
Spangling a cushion green like moss ;
But we will see it, joyful tide !
Some day, to see it in its pride,
The mountain will we cross.”

VII.

—Brother and friend, if verse of mine
Have power to make thy virtues known,
Here let a monumental Stone
Stand—sacred as a Shrine ;
And to the few who pass this way,
Traveller or Shepherd, let it say,
Long as these mighty rocks endure,—
Oh do not thou too fondly brood,
Although deserving of all good,
On any earthly hope, however pure !¹

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 131.

The plant alluded to is the Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*, of Linnæus).

See among the *Poems on the Naming of Places*, No. vi.

Wordsworth's note to the poem is to the following effect :—

"Moss Campion (Silene acaulis)."

This most beautiful plant is scarce in England, though it is found in great abundance upon the mountains of Scotland. The first specimen I ever saw of it, in its native bed, was singularly fine, the tuft or cushion being at least eight inches in diameter, and the root proportionably thick. I have only met with it in two places among our mountains, in both of which I have since sought for it in vain.

Botanists will not, I hope, take it ill, if I caution them against carrying off, inconsiderately, rare and beautiful plants. This has often been done, particularly from Ingleborough and other mountains in Yorkshire, till the species have totally disappeared, to the great regret of lovers of nature living near the places where they grew.

Dr. Cradock writes thus of the poem :—"The parting place of the brothers William and John at the foot of Grisdale Tarn is marked with unusual precision in the poet's note on these verses. It is exactly where the Helvellyn path diverges from the old packhorse track to Paterdale, and is passed by hundreds of tourists. I have found the moss campion in times past within a few yards of the spot, but I do not think that it can now be seen within 200 yards of it. It goes out of flower before the main influx of tourists, and may thus escape entire destruction. The time of its flowering shows that Wordsworth's visit must have been in the spring or very early summer [of 1805], and therefore while his grief was fresh. His burst of feeling on seeing the buzzard rise from the crags of Dollywagon is most true to nature. It

is marvellous with what perverse ingenuity recent sorrow assimilates every object to itself. The far-fetched connection between the bird's flight and the shipwreck might possibly have occurred to any one under the same circumstances. But the comfort which Wordsworth found in the little flower is all his own. In order to understand it, it is necessary to understand *him*."

The buzzard may still be seen wheeling over the crags of Doli-wagen Pike. I saw it "rise from the rock" in May this year, just as described in the poem; and the moss campion still grows not far from the coolest of springs. With Wordsworth's note before me, I shall not particularise the spot, as the plant is doubtless less abundant than it used to be.

[Is it too much to expect of tourists and travellers that they should learn to admire the loveliest things in Nature, without snatching them from their birth-place, and destroying them? Can they not rejoice in the presence of Beauty, and let the memory of what they have seen remain a possession and a joy for ever, without adding the secondary gratification of plucking it, and carrying it a few miles, to wither in their hands, or those of others? It is surely sacrilege to uproot such memorials as the *Silene acaulis* of Grisdale Tarn, or the daffodils and the Christmas roses at Dove Cottage.]

The poem most directly associated with Helvellyn is entitled *Fidelity*. It commemorates the devotion of a dog to its master, who was killed by falling over the rocks at Red Tarn. The two stanzas which describe and enshrine the spirit of the place are as follows:—

It was a cove, a huge recess,
That keeps, till June, December's snow;

A lofty precipice in front,
A silent tarn below !
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land ;
From trace of human foot or hand.

There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer ;
The crags repeat the raven's croak,
In symphony austere ;
Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—
And mists that spread the flying shroud ;
And sunbeams ; and the sounding blast,
That, if it could, would hurry past ;
But that enormous barrier holds it fast.¹

The mountain group of Helvellyn and her sister hills, which he ascended so often, suggests another of his poems, addressed to Miss Blackett—who was living at Fox Ghyll—*On her first ascent to the summit of Helvellyn.*

Inmate of a mountain-dwelling,
Thou hast clomb aloft, and gazed
From the watch-towers of Helvellyn ;
Awed, delighted, and amazed !

Potent was the spell that bound thee,
Not unwilling to obey ;
For blue Ether's arms, flung round thee,
Stilled the pantings of dismay.

Lo ! the dwindled woods and meadows ;
What a vast abyss is there !

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 208.

Lo ! the clouds, the solemn shadows,
And the glistenings—heavenly fair !

And a record of commotion
Which a thousand ridges yield ;
Ridge, and gulf, and distant ocean
Gleaming like a silver shield !

Maiden ! now take flight ;—inherit
Alps or Andes—they are thine !
With the morning's roseate Spirit,
Sweep their length of snowy line ;

Or survey their bright dominions
In the gorgeous colours drest
Flung from off the purple pinions,
Evening spreads throughout the west !

.
For the power of hills is on thee,
As was witnessed through thine eye
Then when old Helvellyn won thee
To confess their majesty !¹

Amongst the memorials of the Italian tour which Wordsworth took with Henry Crabbe Robinson there is one entitled *Musings near Aquapendente*, also associated with Helvellyn. The sight of the broom, growing amongst the Apennines in the month of April, at once suggests his own Westmoreland hills and vales. His spirit flies homeward, and he thinks how it is faring with the place he loved so well.

What ! with this Broom in flower
Close at my side ! She bids me fly to greet

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 175.

Her sisters, soon like her to be attired
With golden blossoms opening at the feet
Of my own Fairfield. The glad greeting given,
Given with a voice and by a look returned
Of old companionship, Time counts not minutes
Ere, from accustomed paths, familiar fields,
The local Genius hurries me aloft,
Transported over that cloud-wooing hill,
Seat Sandal, a fond suitor of the clouds,
With dream-like smoothness, to Helvellyn's top,
There to alight upon crisp moss, and range
Obtaining ampler boon, at every step,
Of visual sovereignty—hills multitudinous,
(Not Apennine can boast of fairer) hills
Pride of two nations, wood and lake and plains,
And prospect right below of deep coves shaped
By skeleton arms, that, from the mountain's trunk
Extended, clasp the winds, with mutual moan
Struggling for liberty, while undismayed
The shepherd struggles with them. Onward thence
And downward by the skirt of Greenside fell
And by Glenridding-screes, and low Glencoign,
Places forsaken now, though loving still
The muses, as they loved them in the days
Of the old minstrels and the border bards.—
But here am I fast bound ; and let it pass,
The simple rapture ;—who that travels far
To feed his mind with watchful eyes could share
Or wish to share it?—One there surely was,
“The Wizard of the North,” with anxious hope
Brought to this genial climate, when disease
Preyed upon body and mind—yet not the less
Had his sunk eye kindled at those dear words
That spake of bards and minstrels ; and his spirit
Had flown with mine to old Helvellyn's brow
Where once together, in his day of strength,

We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free
From sorrow, like the sky above our heads.¹

Descending to the Paterdale valley, there are two poems referring to the district of Ullswater, both so perfect in their way, that, however well known, a book such as this would be incomplete without them. The one is entitled *Airey Force Valley*, the other is the poem on *The Daffodils*. The first is an admirable specimen of what I may call idealised realism. It is faithful to the place in its minutest detail, while the whole scene is perfectly transfigured. You see the brook as it flows, and are instantly carried in imagination to its birthplace, and to its origin, coeval with the hills. Its voice does not lessen, but rather deepens the calm of the valley. The breeze just entering the grove, by the oak unfelt, but moving the lighter leaves of the ash, and making

A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs,

is one of the happiest in the whole range of Wordsworth's imagery; the appeal which Nature makes through one of the senses being heightened by its being expressed in terms of another sense.

—Not a breath of air

Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen.
From the brook's margin, wide around, the trees
Are steadfast as the rocks; the brook itself,
Old as the hills that feed it from afar,
Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
Where all things else are still and motionless.
And yet, even now, a little breeze, perchance

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iii. p. 152.

Escaped from boisterous winds that rage without,
Has entered, by the sturdy oaks unfelt,
But to its gentle touch how sensitive
Is the light ash ! that, pendent from the brow
Of yon dim cave, in seeming silence makes
A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs,
Powerful almost as vocal harmony
To stay the wanderer's steps and soothe his thoughts.¹

Within a short distance of Airey-Force, and near Ullswater, are the ruins of Lyulph's Tower, in connection with which Wordsworth's poem, *The Somnambulist*, will be remembered, of which the first and the last stanzas may be quoted :—

List, ye who pass by Lyulph's Tower
At eve ; how softly then
Doth Aira-force, that torrent hoarse,
Speak from the woody glen !
Fit music for a solemn vale !
And holier seems the ground
To him who catches on the gale
The spirit of a mournful tale,
Embodied in the sound.

Wild stream of Aira, hold thy course,
Nor fear memorial lays,
Where clouds that spread in solemn shade,
Are edged with golden rays !
Dear art thou to the light of heaven,
Though minister of sorrow ;
Sweet is thy voice at pensive even ;
And thou, in lovers' hearts forgiven,
Shalt take thy place with Yarrow !²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 96.

² *Ibid.* vol. iv. pp. 173, 177.

Not far from Lyulph's Tower is Gowbarrow Park, for ever associated with the poem on *The Daffodils*, the last two lines of which—the finest in the poem—were added by Mrs. Wordsworth; in reference to which the poet truly remarks, 'If thoroughly felt, they would annihilate nine-tenths of the reviews of the kingdom; as they would find no readers.' He refers to the style of literary criticism then current. The daffodils still grow in abundance on the shore of the lake below Gowbarrow Park. In 1877, I saw them in luxuriance.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.¹

The day after *The Daffodils* was composed, he wrote the following, while resting at the foot of Brothers Water :—

The Cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun ;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest ;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising ;
There are forty feeding like one !

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill ;
The Ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon :
There's joy in the mountains ;
There's life in the fountains ;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing ;
The rain is over and gone !²

To the right of Brothers Water, as you look towards Kirkstone, is the secluded ravine of Hartsope, at the foot of Dovedale, in which is Hayeswater Tarn. It was near to this, "above Hartsope Hall," that Wordsworth saw the grand atmospheric effect "above

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 103.

² *Ibid.* p. 109.

and among the mountains," described in the second book of *The Excursion* :—

Through the dull mist, a step,
 A single step, that freed me from the skirts
 Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
 Glory beyond all glory ever seen
 By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !
 The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
 Was of a mighty city—boldly say
 A wilderness of building, sinking far
 And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth
 Far sinking into splendour—without end !
 Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
 With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
 And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
 Uplifted : here, serene pavilions bright,
 In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt
 With battlements that on their restless fronts
 Bore stars—illumination of all gems !
 By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
 Upon the dark materials of the storm
 Now pacified : on them, and on the coves
 And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
 The vapours had receded, taking there
 Their station under a cerulean sky.
 Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight !
 Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
 Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky
 Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
 Molten together, and composing thus,
 Each lost in each, that marvellous array
 Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
 Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
 In fleecy folds voluminous enwrapped.
 Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
 Of open court, an object like a throne

Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed ; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified ;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power
For admiration and mysterious awe.¹

Mention of Paterdale recalls the fact that a cottage under Place Fell at one time very nearly became the poet's home. Had it done so, Ullswater would have been immortalised as Rydal has been. The crags of Place and Hallin Fell would have taken the place of Nab Scar and Loughrigg ; all the rocky promontories and natural terraces of Ullswater, the streams and groves of Paterdale, would have been made familiar to posterity by his genius. The following is the account of the transaction supplied in the *Memoirs*. A small cottage and a little estate, under the magnificent hill called Place Fell, attracted his attention in 1805 ; and, hearing that it might be purchased, he made an offer of £800 for it. The owner would not part with it for less than £1000. This Wordsworth did not think it prudent to give. But Lord Lonsdale, desirous of presenting the small property to Wordsworth, paid £800 to his account, under the impression that the ground was to be sold for that amount. Wordsworth, however, would only accept of £200, which he thought was the amount the proprietor had asked in excess of its real value.² I have been unable to obtain any information as to the subsequent destination of this property.

From Brothers Water one naturally ascends the

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 64.

² *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 319.

Pass of Kirkstone. Of his poem referring to this pass, Wordsworth said, "Thoughts and feelings of many walks in all weathers, by day and night, over this pass, alone, and with beloved friends."¹

I.

Within the mind strong fancies work,
A deep delight the bosom thrills,
Oft as I pass along the fork
Of these fraternal hills :
Where, save the rugged road, we find
No appanage of human kind,
Nor hint of man ; if stone or rock
Seem not his handy-work to mock
By something cognisably shaped ;
Mockery—or model roughly hewn,
And left as if by earthquake strewn,
Or from the Flood escaped :
Altars for Druid service fit ;
(But where no fire was ever lit,
Unless the glow-worm to the skies
Thence offer nightly sacrifice)
Wrinkled Egyptian monument ;
Green moss-grown tower ; or hoary tent ;
Tents of a camp that never shall be razed—
On which four thousand years have gazed !

II.

Ye plough-shares sparkling on the slopes !
Ye snow-white lambs that trip
Imprisoned 'mid the formal props
Of restless ownership !
Ye trees, that may to-morrow fall
To feed the insatiate Prodigal !
Lawns, houses, chattels, groves and fields

¹ I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 46.

And all the fertile valley shields ;
Wages of folly—baits of crime,
Of life's uneasy game the stake,
Playthings that keep the eyes awake
Of drowsy, dotard Time ;—
O care ! O guilt !—O vales and plains,
Here, 'mid his own unvexed domains,
A Genius dwells, that can subdue
At once all memory of You,—
Most potent when mists veil the sky,
Mists that distort and magnify ;
While the coarse rushes, to the sweeping breeze,
Sigh forth their ancient melodies !

III.

List to those shriller notes !—*that* march
Perchance was on the blast,
When, through this Height's inverted arch,
Rome's earliest legion passed !
—They saw, adventurously impelled,
And older eyes than theirs beheld,
This block—and yon, whose church-like frame
Gives to this savage Pass its name.
Aspiring Road ! that lov'st to hide
Thy daring in a vapoury bourn,
Not seldom may the hour return
When thou shalt be my guide :
And I (as all men may find cause,
When life is at a weary pause,
And they have panted up the hill
Of duty with reluctant will)
Be thankful, even though tired and faint,
For the rich bounties of constraint ;
Whence oft invigorating transports flow
That choice lacked courage to bestow !

IV.

My Soul was grateful for delight
That wore a threatening brow ;

A veil is lifted—can she slight
The scene that opens now?
Though habitation none appear,
The greenness tells, man must be there :
The shelter—that the perspective
Is of the clime in which we live :
Where Toil pursues his daily round :
Where Pity sheds sweet tears—and Love,
In woodbine bower or birchen grove,
Inflicts his tender wound.
—Who comes not hither ne'er shall know
How beautiful the world below ;
Nor can he guess how lightly leaps
The brook adown the rocky steeps.
Farewell, thou desolate Domain !
Hope, pointing to the cultured plain,
Carols like a shepherd-boy :
And who is she?—Can that be Joy !
Who, with a sunbeam for her guide,
Smoothly skims the meadows wide :
While Faith, from yonder opening cloud,
To vale and hill proclaims aloud,
“Whate'er the weak may dread, the wicked dare,
Thy lot, O Man, is good, thy portion fair !”¹

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 168.

CHAPTER V.

AMBLESIDE, LANGDALE, BLEA TARN, ETC.

DESCENDING to Ambleside by Stock Ghyll, the mountain in front, across the valley, is Wansfell; thus addressed by Wordsworth, as it is seen from Rydal Mount :—

Wansfell ! this Household has a favoured lot,
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rays,
Or when along thy breast serenely float
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard !) thy praise
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought
Of glory lavished on our quiet days.
Bountiful Son of Earth ! when we are gone
From every object dear to mortal sight,
As soon we shall be, may these words attest
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
Thy visionary majesties of light,
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest.¹

To this may be added the sonnet referring to Ambleside, which follows it :—

While beams of orient light shoot wide and high,
Deep in the vale a little rural Town

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 317.

Breathes forth a cloud-like creature of its own,
 That mounts not toward the radiant morning sky,
 But, with a less ambitious sympathy,
 Hangs o'er its Parent waking to the cares,
 Troubles and toils that every day prepares.
 So Fancy, to the musing Poet's eye
 Endears that Lingerer. And how blest her sway
 (Like influence never may my soul reject)
 If the calm Heaven, now to its zenith decked
 With glorious forms in numberless array,
 To the lone shepherd on the hills disclose
 Gleams from a world in which the saints repose.¹

The forty-fifth sonnet in the third section of the same series (the *Miscellaneous Sonnets*) is not inappropriate here.

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY.

Is then no nook of English ground secure
 From rash assault ! Schemes of retirement sown
 In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
 As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
 Must perish ;—how can they this blight endure ?
 And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
 Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
 'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown ?
 Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
 Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance :
 Plead for thy peace, that beautiful romance
 Of nature ; and, if human hearts be dead,
 Speak, passing winds ; ye torrents, with your strong
 And constant voice, protest against the wrong.²

After reading this sonnet one naturally wonders what its author would have thought of the appropriation

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 318.

² *Ibid.* p. 319.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

Another sonnet, number six of the first series, refers to a spot in this part of the district, very easily identified,—and yet, I 'suspect, hardly known. The following "note" upon it occurs in the I. F. MSS. "This rill trickles down the hill-side into Windermere near Low Wood. My sister and I, on our first visit together to this part of the country, walked from Kendal, and we rested to refresh ourselves by the side of the lake where the streamlet falls into it. This sonnet was written some years after in recollection of that happy ramble, that most happy day and hour."¹

There is a little unpretending Rill
Of limpid water, humbler far than aught
That ever among Men or Naiads sought
Notice or name !—It quivers down the hill,
Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 53.

Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
Ofter than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
Of private recollection sweet and still !
Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
But, faithful Emma ! thou with me canst say
That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
And flies their memory fast almost as they ;
The immortal Spirit of one happy day
Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear.¹

Dr. Cradock writes, "There can surely be no doubt as to the identity of the 'little unpretending rill.' It runs into the lake about 100 yards southwards from Low Wood Hotel garden, at the point where Wordsworth and his sister, walking from Kendal, first came upon the lake. It comes down from High Skelgill, and crosses the road, very near its junction with the lane leading to Troutbeck."

Ascending the valley of Langdale, and following the windings of the Brathay, another of these descriptive sonnets is our best guide to the spirit of the place. It was suggested on the banks of that stream, by the sight of those ubiquitous Pikes, which are visible from so many remote points in the district,—the twin Langdales, as seen on *November 1.*

How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright
The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strown with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 263.

Of sad mortality's earth-sullyng wing,
Unswapt, unstained? Nor shall the ærial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village
of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen
Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's
commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas ! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting
place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-
Boys ; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force*.

The valley rings with mirth and joy ;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight ;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest ;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food ;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun :
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii, p. 285.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

.

It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, "the craggy ridge that rises between the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere," is associated the "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont," already referred to, which describes the cottage :

High on the sunny hill,
Luminous region, fair as if the prime
Were tempting all astir to look aloft and climb.²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 161.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 1.

Here, too, he listened to the flute-playing of the Rev. Mr. Tilbeck of Peterhouse, Cambridge, which suggested the sonnet beginning

The fairest, brightest, hues of ether fade,
The sweetest notes must terminate and die;¹

and concluding thus :

Yet sacred is to me this mountain's head
Whence I have risen, uplifted on the breeze
Of harmony above all earthy care.

Hackett cottage is also described in *The Excursion*, and it is more especially with the view of identifying the places referred to in that poem that I have now imaginatively wandered up the Langdale valley.

Of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick, "In the poem I suppose that the pedlar and I ascended from a plain country up the vale of Langdale, and struck off a good way above the chapel to the western side of the vale. We ascended the hill, and thence looked down upon the circular recess in which lies Blea Tarn, chosen by the Solitary for his retreat."² This is more indefinite than appears at first sight. They "ascended the hill,"—which, of course, is Lingmoor,—but by what route? by the cleft which divides Lingmoor from Side Pike, almost opposite Millbeck and Dungeon Ghyll in Great Langdale? or past Oak How and up the higher part of Lingmoor to its tarn, descending by Blea Tarn Ghyll? The question is, as we shall see, important, as its answer will determine the site of that recess in the Blea Tarn Valley, which the Solitary describes so minutely. This

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii, p. 264.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii, p. 199.

is his description of their walk through lower Langdale, past Elter Water and Chapel Stile :

He led me toward the hills
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;
But, in the majesty of distance, now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with ærial softness clad,
And beautified with morning's purple beams.¹

He contrasts the joy of those who walk in these mountain regions, with that of those who ride or drive :—

How faint
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts
/ —Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.²

The “ throng of people ” engaged at their “ annual wake ” next described must have been the villagers of Langdale. The wanderer points to the “ craggy summits ”³ on the left, and they diverged

as if their quest had been
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall
Of water, or some lofty eminence,
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide,
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,
A steep ascent ; and reached a dreary plain,
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops
Before us ; savage region ! which I paced
Dispirited.⁴

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 43.

² *Ibid.* p. 44.

³ *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 50.

This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Shelter Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them, the Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wetherlam, and the Conistoun mountains to the south-west. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

When, all at once, behold !
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,
Though not of want : the little fields made green
By husbandry of many thrifty years,
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring vales
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.¹

The "little lowly vale" is, of course, the head of Little Langdale, with Blea Tarn in the centre, as seen from the top of Lingmoor, the only point (except the summit of Blake Rigg) from which it seems "urn-like."

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 50.

The "small opening"—"where a heath-clad ridge supplied a boundary"—is that which leads down into Little Langdale by Fell Foot and Busk. The "nook" is not now "treeless," but the fir-wood on the western side enhances the solitude, and deepens the sense of seclusion. The "liquid pool that glittered in the sun" is, of course, Blea Tarn. The "one abode, no more," is the cottage, still solitary, now called Blea Tarn House, which is passed on the left under Side Pike. It is still true that up to this nook, "from neighbouring vales," the cuckoo

Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

The thoughts and feelings of the poet, when they first caught sight of this green recess from the top of Lingmoor, are thus expressed :—

Ah ! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here !
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath :—full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself
With the few needful things that life requires.
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,
How tenderly protected ! Far and near
We have an image of the pristine earth,
X — The planet in its nakedness : were this
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet : peace is here
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private ; years that pass
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay

The common penalties of mortal life,
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.¹

Before they descend from the top of the mountain
they hear a funeral dirge :

We listened, looking down upon the hut
But seeing no one ;

and then the funeral procession, issuing from the
cottage, winds away to the south, down the ridge into
Little Langdale. Thereafter they descend.

So, to a steep and difficult descent
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top
Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,
I, more impatient in my downward course,
Had landed upon easy ground ; and there
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold
An object that enticed my steps aside !
A narrow, winding, entry opened out
Into a platform—that lay, sheepfold-wise,
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock
And one old moss-grown wall ;—a cool recess,
And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 50.

Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;
 Nor wanting ornament of walks between,
 With mimic trees inserted in the turf,
 And gardens interposed.¹

This is the recess in which Voltaire's novel was supposed to be found. It was, I think, at a point about 200 yards above the house, in a narrow gorge below a waterfall, where a "moss-grown wall" still approaches close to the rock on the other side of the stream, and where a "penthouse" might easily be made by children.

The question will have occurred to many a reader of *The Excursion*, Did Wordsworth mean this to be a literal description of what he saw in his mountain rambles? or, since the characters are in part ideal, and framed out of elements supplied by different individuals, is not the scene also idealised? I do not think that it is so to any considerable extent. While the actual meeting with an individual called the "Solitary," living at Blea Tarn, and the finding of a copy of Voltaire in a penthouse, belong to the embellishment or drapery of the poem, it would be a total misreading of the genius of Wordsworth to suppose that he would idealise the scenery; or that he would describe it at all, without a broad basis of fact. Inaccuracies there are, as well as idealisations, in his description of the locality (as we shall see); but Wordsworth's mind was too firmly anchored to reality, nay, it was too topographical, to permit of his building up a wholly ideal picture, especially since he meant it to serve as the vehicle of ethical instruction and religious lessons. He tells us (in the I. F. notes)—speaking of the picture given

¹ *Excursion*, book ii, p. 52.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

Another sonnet, number six of the first series, refers to a spot in this part of the district, very easily identified,—and yet, I suspect, hardly known. The following "note" upon it occurs in the I. F. MSS. "This rill trickles down the hill-side into Windermere near Low Wood. My sister and I, on our first visit together to this part of the country, walked from Kendal, and we rested to refresh ourselves by the side of the lake where the streamlet falls into it. This sonnet was written some years after in recollection of that happy ramble, that most happy day and hour."¹

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Of limpid water, humbler far than aught
That ever among Men or Naiads sought
Notice or name!—It quivers down the hill,
Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

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Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
Ofter than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
Of private recollection sweet and still !
Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
But, faithful Emma ! thou with me canst say
That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
And flies their memory fast almost as they ;
The immortal Spirit of one happy day
Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear.¹

Dr. Cradock writes, "There can surely be no doubt as to the identity of the 'little unpretending rill.' It runs into the lake about 100 yards southwards from Low Wood Hotel garden, at the point where Wordsworth and his sister, walking from Kendal, first came upon the lake. It comes down from High Skelgill, and crosses the road, very near its junction with the lane leading to Troutbeck."

Ascending the valley of Langdale, and following the windings of the Brathay, another of these descriptive sonnets is our best guide to the spirit of the place. It was suggested on the banks of that stream, by the sight of those ubiquitous Pikes, which are visible from so many remote points in the district,—the twin Langdales, as seen on *November 1*.

How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright
The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strown with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight

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Of sad mortality's earth-sullyng wing,
Unswapt, unstained? Nor shall the aërial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village
of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen
Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's
commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas ! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting
place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-
Boys ; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force*.

The valley rings with mirth and joy ;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight ;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest ;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food ;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun :
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

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It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, "the craggy ridge that rises between the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere," is associated the "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont," already referred to, which describes the cottage :

High on the sunny hill,
Luminous region, fair as if the prime
Were tempting all astir to look aloft and climb.²

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² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 1.

Here, too, he listened to the flute-playing of the Rev. Mr. Tilbeck of Peterhouse, Cambridge, which suggested the sonnet beginning

The fairest, brightest, hues of ether fade,
The sweetest notes must terminate and die;¹

and concluding thus :

Yet sacred is to me this mountain's head
Whence I have risen, uplifted on the breeze
Of harmony above all earthy care.

Hackett cottage is also described in *The Excursion*, and it is more especially with the view of identifying the places referred to in that poem that I have now imaginatively wandered up the Langdale valley.

Of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick, "In the poem I suppose that the pedlar and I ascended from a plain country up the vale of Langdale, and struck off a good way above the chapel to the western side of the vale. We ascended the hill, and thence looked down upon the circular recess in which lies Blea Tarn, chosen by the Solitary for his retreat."² This is more indefinite than appears at first sight. They "ascended the hill,"—which, of course, is Lingmoor,—but by what route? by the cleft which divides Lingmoor from Side Pike, almost opposite Millbeck and Dungeon Ghyll in Great Langdale? or past Oak How and up the higher part of Lingmoor to its tarn, descending by Blea Tarn Ghyll? The question is, as we shall see, important, as its answer will determine the site of that recess in the Blea Tarn Valley, which the Solitary describes so minutely. This

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 264.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.

is his description of their walk through lower Langdale, past Elter Water and Chapel Stile :

He led me toward the hills
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;
But, in the majesty of distance, now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with aerial softness clad,
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³ *Ibid.* p. 44.

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CHAPTER V.

AMBLESIDE, LANGDALE, BLEA TARN, ETC.

DESCENDING to Ambleside by Stock Ghyll, the mountain in front, across the valley, is Wansfell; thus addressed by Wordsworth, as it is seen from Rydal Mount :—

Wansfell ! this Household has a favoured lot,
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rays,
Or when along thy breast serenely float
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard !) thy praise
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought
Of glory lavished on our quiet days.
Bountiful Son of Earth ! when we are gone
From every object dear to mortal sight,
As soon we shall be, may these words attest
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
Thy visionary majesties of light,
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest.¹

To this may be added the sonnet referring to Ambleside, which follows it :—

While beams of orient light shoot wide and high,
Deep in the vale a little rural Town

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 317.

Breathes forth a cloud-like creature of its own,
That mounts not toward the radiant morning sky,
But, with a less ambitious sympathy,
Hangs o'er its Parent waking to the cares,
Troubles and toils that every day prepares.
So Fancy, to the musing Poet's eye
Endears that Lingerer. And how blest her sway
(Like influence never may my soul reject)
If the calm Heaven, now to its zenith decked
With glorious forms in numberless array,
To the lone shepherd on the hills disclose
Gleams from a world in which the saints repose.¹

The forty-fifth sonnet in the third section of the same series (the *Miscellaneous Sonnets*) is not inappropriate here.

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY.

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault ! Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish ;—how can they this blight endure ?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown ?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance :
Plead for thy peace, that beautiful romance
Of nature ; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds ; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.²

After reading this sonnet one naturally wonders what its author would have thought of the appropriation

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 318.

² *Ibid.* p. 319.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

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Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

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Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
 Ofter than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
 Of private recollection sweet and still !
 Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
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 That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
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Poetical Works, vol. ii, p. 264.

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This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Shelter Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them, the Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wetherlam, and the Coniston mountains to the south-west. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

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Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;
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A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
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Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

The thoughts and feelings of the poet, when they first caught sight of this green recess from the top of Lingmoor, are thus expressed :—

Ah ! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here !
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath :—full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself
With the few needful things that life requires.
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,
How tenderly protected ! Far and near
We have an image of the pristine earth,
X — The planet in its nakedness : were this
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet : peace is here
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private ; years that pass
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay

CHAPTER V.

AMBLESIDE, LANGDALE, BLEA TARN, ETC.

DESCENDING to Ambleside by Stock Ghyll, the mountain in front, across the valley, is Wansfell; thus addressed by Wordsworth, as it is seen from Ryeburn Mount :—

Wansfell ! this Household has a favoured lot,
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rosy
Or when along thy breast serenely float
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard !) thy praise
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought
Of glory lavished on our quiet days.
Bountiful Son of Earth ! when we are gone
From every object dear to mortal sight,
As soon we shall be, may these words attest
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
Thy visionary majesties of light,
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest

To this may be added the sonnet referring to Ambleside, which follows it :—

While beams of orient light shoot wide and high,
Deep in the vale a little rural Town

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 317.

Breathes forth a cloud-like creature of its own,
That mounts not toward the radiant morning sky,
But, with a less ambitious sympathy,
Hangs o'er its Parent waking to the cares,
Troubles and toils that every day prepares.
So Fancy, to the musing Poet's eye
Endears that Lingerer. And how blest her sway
(Like influence never may my soul reject)
If the calm Heaven, now to its zenith decked
With glorious forms in numberless array,
To the lone shepherd on the hills disclose
Gleams from a world in which the saints repose.¹

The forty-fifth sonnet in the third section of the same series (the *Miscellaneous Sonnets*) is not inappropriate here.

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY.

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault ! Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish ;—how can they this blight endure ?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown ?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance :
Plead for thy peace, that beautiful romance
Of nature ; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds ; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.²

After reading this sonnet one naturally wonders what its author would have thought of the appropriation

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of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

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There is a little unpretending Rill
Of limpid water, humbler far than aught
That ever among Men or Naiads sought
Notice or name !—It quivers down the hill,
Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

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Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
Ofter than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
Of private recollection sweet and still !
Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
But, faithful Emma ! thou with me canst say
That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
And flies their memory fast almost as they ;
The immortal Spirit of one happy day
Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear.¹

Dr. Cradock writes, " There can surely be no doubt as to the identity of the 'little unpretending rill.' It runs into the lake about 100 yards southwards from Low Wood Hotel garden, at the point where Wordsworth and his sister, walking from Kendal, first came upon the lake. It comes down from High Skelgill, and crosses the road, very near its junction with the lane leading to Troutbeck."

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How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright
The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strown with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 263.

Of sad mortality's earth-sullyng wing,
Unswep't, unstain'd? Nor shall the ærial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has fill'd the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village
of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen
Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's
commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas ! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting
place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-
Boys ; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force*.

The valley rings with mirth and joy ;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight ;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest ;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food ;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun :
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 285.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, " the craggy ridge that rises between the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere," is associated the " Epistle to Sir George Beaumont," already referred to, which describes the cottage :

High on the sunny hill,
Luminous region, fair as if the prime
Were tempting all astrid to look aloft and climb.²

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The fairest, brightest, hues of ether fade,
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Whence I have risen, uplifted on the breeze
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Hackett cottage is also described in *The Excursion*, and it is more especially with the view of identifying the places referred to in that poem that I have now imaginatively wandered up the Langdale valley.

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is his description of their walk through lower Langdale, past Elter Water and Chapel Stile :

He led me toward the hills
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;
But, in the majesty of distance, now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with ærial softness clad,
And beautified with morning's purple beams.¹

He contrasts the joy of those who walk in these mountain regions, with that of those who ride or drive :—

How faint
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts
/ Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.²

The “ throng of people ” engaged at their “ annual wake ” next described must have been the villagers of Langdale. The wanderer points to the “ craggy summits ”³ on the left, and they diverged

as if their quest had been
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall
Of water, or some lofty eminence,
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide,
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,
A steep ascent ; and reached a dreary plain,
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops
Before us ; savage region ! which I paced
Dispirited.⁴

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This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Shelter Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them, the Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wetherlam, and the Coniston mountains to the south-west. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

When, all at once, behold !
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,
Though not of want : the little fields made green
By husbandry of many thrifty years,
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring vales
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Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

The thoughts and feelings of the poet, when they first caught sight of this green recess from the top of Lingmoor, are thus expressed :—

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Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath :—full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself
With the few needful things that life requires.
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,
How tenderly protected ! Far and near
We have an image of the pristine earth,
X — The planet in its nakedness : were this
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet : peace is here
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private ; years that pass
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay

The common penalties of mortal life,
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.¹

Before they descend from the top of the mountain
they hear a funeral dirge :

We listened, looking down upon the hut
But seeing no one ;

and then the funeral procession, issuing from the
cottage, winds away to the south, down the ridge into
Little Langdale. Thereafter they descend.

So, to a steep and difficult descent
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top
Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,
I, more impatient in my downward course,
Had landed upon easy ground ; and there
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold
An object that enticed my steps aside !
A narrow, winding, entry opened out
Into a platform—that lay, sheepfold-wise,
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock
And one old moss-grown wall ;—a cool recess,
And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show

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Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;
 Nor wanting ornament of walks between,
 With mimic trees inserted in the turf,
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This is the recess in which Voltaire's novel was supposed to be found. It was, I think, at a point about 200 yards above the house, in a narrow gorge below a waterfall, where a "moss-grown wall" still approaches close to the rock on the other side of the stream, and where a "penthouse" might easily be made by children.

The question will have occurred to many a reader of *The Excursion*, Did Wordsworth mean this to be a literal description of what he saw in his mountain rambles? or, since the characters are in part ideal, and framed out of elements supplied by different individuals, is not the scene also idealised? I do not think that it is so to any considerable extent. While the actual meeting with an individual called the "Solitary," living at Blea Tarn, and the finding of a copy of Voltaire in a penthouse, belong to the embellishment or drapery of the poem, it would be a total misreading of the genius of Wordsworth to suppose that he would idealise the scenery; or that he would describe it at all, without a broad basis of fact. Inaccuracies there are, as well as idealisations, in his description of the locality (as we shall see); but Wordsworth's mind was too firmly anchored to reality, nay, it was too topographical, to permit of his building up a wholly ideal picture, especially since he meant it to serve as the vehicle of ethical instruction and religious lessons. He tells us (in the I. F. notes)—speaking of the picture given

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 52.

Of sad mortality's earth-sullyng wing,
Unswapt, unstained? Nor shall the aërial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village
of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen
Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's
commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting
place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-
Boys*; or, *Dungeon-Ghyll Force*.

The valley rings with mirth and joy;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun:
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

.
It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, " the craggy ridge that rises between
the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere,"
is associated the " Epistle to Sir George Beaumont,"
already referred to, which describes the cottage :

High on the sunny hill,
Luminous region, fair as if the prime
Were tempting all astir to look aloft and climb.²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 161.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 1.

Here, too, he listened to the flute-playing of the Rev. Mr. Tilbeck of Peterhouse, Cambridge, which suggested the sonnet beginning

The fairest, brightest, hues of ether fade,
The sweetest notes must terminate and die ;¹

and concluding thus :

Yet sacred is to me this mountain's head
Whence I have risen, uplifted on the breeze
Of harmony above all earthy care.

Hackett cottage is also described in *The Excursion*, and it is more especially with the view of identifying the places referred to in that poem that I have now imaginatively wandered up the Langdale valley.

Of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth said to Miss Fenwick, "In the poem I suppose that the pedlar and I ascended from a plain country up the vale of Langdale, and struck off a good way above the chapel to the western side of the vale. We ascended the hill, and thence looked down upon the circular recess in which lies Blea Tarn, chosen by the Solitary for his retreat."² This is more indefinite than appears at first sight. They "ascended the hill,"—which, of course, is Lingmoor,—but by what route? by the cleft which divides Lingmoor from Side Pike, almost opposite Millbeck and Dungeon Ghyll in Great Langdale? or past Oak How and up the higher part of Lingmoor to its tarn, descending by Blea Tarn Ghyll? The question is, as we shall see, important, as its answer will determine the site of that recess in the Blea Tarn Valley, which the Solitary describes so minutely. This

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 264.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.

is his description of their walk through lower Langdale, past Elter Water and Chapel Stile :

He led me toward the hills
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;
But, in the majesty of distance, now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with ærial softness clad,
And beautified with morning's purple beams.¹

He contrasts the joy of those who walk in these mountain regions, with that of those who ride or drive :—

How faint
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts
/ —Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.²

The “throng of people” engaged at their “annual wake” next described must have been the villagers of Langdale. The wanderer points to the “craggy summits”³ on the left, and they diverged

as if their quest had been
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall
Of water, or some lofty eminence,
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide,
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,
A steep ascent ; and reached a dreary plain,
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops
Before us ; savage region ! which I paced
Dispirited.⁴

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 43.

² *Ibid.* p. 44.

³ *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 50.

This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Shelter Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them, the Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wetherlam, and the Conistone mountains to the south-west. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

When, all at once, behold !

Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,
Though not of want : the little fields made green
By husbandry of many thrifty years,
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
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The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,
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LINGMOOR

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This is the recess in which Voltaire's novel was supposed to be found. It was, I think, at a point about 200 yards above the house, in a narrow gorge below a waterfall, where a "moss-grown wall" still approaches close to the rock on the other side of the stream, and where a "penthouse" might easily be made by children.

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¹ *Excursion*, book ii, p. 52.

by the Wanderer of the living—"in this nothing is introduced but what was taken from nature and real life." But he goes on to say (I fear mixing up two places), "The cottage was called Hackett, and stands, as described, on the southern extremity of the ridge which separates the two Langdales."¹ A house in that situation could not, of course, be the Blea Tarn cottage. On the other hand, the cottage in which the Solitary lived *must* have been at Blea Tarn.

If we suppose the "penthouse," etc., to have been, as I conjecture, in Blea Tarn Ghyll, it is very easy to realise the two men descending from it to the place where the Wanderer

made a sudden stand ;
For full in view, approaching through a gate
That opened from the enclosure of green fields,
Into the rough uncultivated ground
Behold the man, etc.²

This of course refers to the flat ground on the more level part of the valley, near the cottage, along the side of which the present road passes.

Then, after their greeting and conversation on the

Many precious rites
And customs of our rural ancestry, etc.,
they proceed all together to the cottage.

Homely was the spot ;
And, to my feeling, ere we reached the door,
Had almost a forbidding nakedness ;
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,
Than it appeared when from the beetling rock
We had looked down upon it. All within,

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 200.

² *Excursion*, book ii. p. 54.

As left by the departed company,
Was silent ; save the solitary clock
That on mine ear ticked with a mournful sound.—
Following our Guide, we clomb the cottage-stairs
And reached a small apartment dark and low,
Which was no sooner entered than our Host
Said gaily, “ This is my domain, my cell,
My hermitage, my cabin, what you will—

. scattered was the floor,
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,
With books, maps, fossils, withered plants, and
flowers,
And tufts of mountain moss: Mechanic tools
Lay intermixed with scraps of paper, some
Scribbled with verse : a broken angling-rod
And shattered telescope, together linked
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook ;
And instruments of music, some half-made,
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.¹

In this little room, ‘dark and low,’ in the upper
flat of the cottage, they sat down to a homely rustic
feast ; and Wordsworth goes on to describe, in a
noble passage, how

While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate
Fronting the window of that little cell,
I could not, ever and anon, forbear
To glance an upward look on two huge Peaks,
That from some other vale peered into this.
“Those lusty twins,” exclaimed our host, “if here
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become
Your prized companions. Many are the notes
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth

¹ *Excursion*, book ii, p. 59.

From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores ;
And well those lofty brethren bear their part
In the wild concert—chiefly when the storm
Rides high ; then all the upper air they fill
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,
In mighty current ; theirs, too, is the song
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails ;
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,
Methinks that I have heard them echo back
The thunder's greeting. Nor have nature's laws
Left them ungifted with a power to yield
Music of finer tone ; a harmony,
So do I call it, though it be the hand
Of silence, though there be no voice ;—the clouds,
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,
Motions of moonlight, all come thither—touch,
And have an answer—thither come, and shape
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts
And idle spirits :—there the sun himself,
At the calm close of summer's longest day,
Rests his substantial orb ;—between those heights
And on the top of either pinnacle,
More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,
Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.
Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
Than the mute agents stirring there :—alone
Here do I sit and watch.”¹

I cannot resist quoting what Mr. Stopford Brooke says of this passage :—“ Mark how the wind rejoices in these peaks, and they give back its wild pleasure : how all the things which touch and haunt them get their reply ; how they are loved and love ; how busy are the mute agents there ; how proud the stars to shine on them.”²

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 60.

² *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 108.

It is usually supposed that the

two huge peaks

That from some other vale peer into this,
Those lusty twins . . .

refer to the Langdales, for no other reason, I suspect, than that the Langdales are twins. But, if the three men were seated, as described, in the upper room of the cottage (which has one small window looking towards the Pikes), they could not possibly see them. Side Pike and Pike o' Blisco alone could be seen. Either then, *these* are the peaks referred to, or, what is more likely, the realism of the narrative here gives way, and the finer pikes of Langdale are introduced, though they are not visible from the house, because they belong to the district, and can be seen from so many points around.

Blea Tarn house is a humble cottage, resembling Ann Tyson's house at Hawkshead, in which Wordsworth boarded when at school. On the ground-floor are a parlour, kitchen, and dairy. Ascending by nine stone steps to the upper flat, there are four small rooms, and one of these looks, as I have said, northwards in the direction of the Langdale Pikes. There are what seem the foundations of an older house a little lower down, say twenty yards nearer the tarn, beside a pollard ash; and there are two cherry trees still farther down, one of considerable age. But I believe the present house was standing at the beginning of this century. It seems quite as old as the house at Grasmere, in which the incumbent of Wytheburn—the Pastor of *The Excursion*—lived. There are two large poplars to the north of the cottage, and a sycamore near them. I cannot believe that the place was *entirely* "treeless" in Wordsworth's time.

The description of the ruined chapel, which follows, towards the end of the second book of *The Excursion*, is not taken from Langdale, but avowedly from the ruins on the ridge which separates Paterdale from Boardale and Martindale, near which Wordsworth saw the grand atmospheric effect recorded in p. 127.

But it is in reference to the places described at the beginning of the third book of *The Excursion*, entitled *Despondency*, that the identification of details is most satisfactory. This book commences thus,

A humming bee—a little tinkling rill—
A pair of falcons wheeling on the wing,
In clamorous agitation, round the crest
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel—
By each and all of these the pensive ear
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,
When through the cottage-threshold we had passed,
And, deep within that lonesome valley, stood
Once more beneath the concave of a blue
And cloudless sky.—Anon exclaimed our Host,

But which way shall I lead you?—how contrive,
In spot so parsimoniously endowed,
That the brief hours, which yet remain, may reap
Some recompense of knowledge or delight?"
So saying, round he looked, as if perplexed ;
And, to remove those doubts, my grey-haired Friend
Said—"Shall we take this pathway for our guide?—
Upward it winds, as if, in summer heats,
Its line had first been fashioned by the flock
Seeking a place of refuge at the root
Of yon black Yew-tree, whose protruded boughs
Darken the silver bosom of the crag,
From which she draws her meagre sustenance.
There in commodious shelter may we rest.

Or let us trace this streamlet to its source ;
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,
And a few steps may bring us to the spot
Where, haply, crowned with flowrets and green herbs,
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,
Like human life from darkness."—A quick turn
Through a strait passage of encumbered ground,
Proved that such hope was vain ; for now we stood
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,
And saw the water, that composed this rill,
Descending, disembodied, and diffused
O'er the smooth surface of an ample crag,
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.
All further progress here was barred ;—And who,
Thought I, if master of a vacant hour,
Here would not linger, willingly detained ?
Whether to such wild objects he were led
When copious rains have magnified the stream
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,
Or introduced at this more quiet time.¹

There is still a single "yew-tree" high up the eastern side of the valley, in the face of Lingmoor Fell, "darkening the silver bosom of the crag." The three men are supposed to be standing on the west of the tarn, and just a little to the north of the fir-wood which overshadows it,

Deep within the lonesome valley.

I think that this place can be identified even by the streamlet, which the Solitary proposes they should trace to its source. But the identification becomes complete to the letter, in the light of what follows.

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground,
The hidden nook discovered to our view

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 69.

This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Shelter Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them, the Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wetherlam, and the Coniston mountains to the south-west. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

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And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 50.

Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;
 Nor wanting ornament of walks between,
 With mimic trees inserted in the turf,
 And gardens interposed.¹

This is the recess in which Voltaire's novel was supposed to be found. It was, I think, at a point about 200 yards above the house, in a narrow gorge below a waterfall, where a "moss-grown wall" still approaches close to the rock on the other side of the stream, and where a "penthouse" might easily be made by children.

The question will have occurred to many a reader of *The Excursion*, Did Wordsworth mean this to be a literal description of what he saw in his mountain rambles? or, since the characters are in part ideal, and framed out of elements supplied by different individuals, is not the scene also idealised? I do not think that it is so to any considerable extent. While the actual meeting with an individual called the "Solitary," living at Blea Tarn, and the finding of a copy of Voltaire in a penthouse, belong to the embellishment or drapery of the poem, it would be a total misreading of the genius of Wordsworth to suppose that he would idealise the scenery; or that he would describe it at all, without a broad basis of fact. Inaccuracies there are, as well as idealisations, in his description of the locality (as we shall see); but Wordsworth's mind was too firmly anchored to reality, nay, it was too topographical, to permit of his building up a wholly ideal picture, especially since he meant it to serve as the vehicle of ethical instruction and religious lessons. He tells us (in the I. F. notes)—speaking of the picture given

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 52.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

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Of limpid water, humbler far than aught
That ever among Men or Naiads sought
Notice or name!—It quivers down the hill,
Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

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Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
Ofter than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
Of private recollection sweet and still !
Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
But, faithful Emma ! thou with me canst say
That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
And flies their memory fast almost as they ;
The immortal Spirit of one happy day
Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear.¹

Dr. Cradock writes, "There can surely be no doubt as to the identity of the 'little unpretending rill.' It runs into the lake about 100 yards southwards from Low Wood Hotel garden, at the point where Wordsworth and his sister, walking from Kendal, first came upon the lake. It comes down from High Skelgill, and crosses the road, very near its junction with the lane leading to Troutbeck."

Ascending the valley of Langdale, and following the windings of the Brathay, another of these descriptive sonnets is our best guide to the spirit of the place. It was suggested on the banks of that stream, by the sight of those ubiquitous Pikes, which are visible from so many remote points in the district,—the twin Langdales, as seen on *November 1*.

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The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strown with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 263.

Of sad mortality's earth-sullying wing,
Unswapt, unstained? Nor shall the ærial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village
of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen
Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's
commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas ! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting
place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-
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The valley rings with mirth and joy ;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight ;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest ;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food ;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun :
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 285.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

.

It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, " the craggy ridge that rises between the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere," is associated the " Epistle to Sir George Beaumont," already referred to, which describes the cottage :

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Hackett cottage is also described in *The Excursion*, and it is more especially with the view of identifying the places referred to in that poem that I have now imaginatively wandered up the Langdale valley.

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¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 264.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 199.

is his description of their walk through lower Langdale, past Elter Water and Chapel Stile :

He led me toward the hills
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;
But, in the majesty of distance, now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with ærial softness clad,
And beautified with morning's purple beams.¹

He contrasts the joy of those who walk in these mountain regions, with that of those who ride or drive :—

How faint
Compared with ours ! who, pacing side by side,
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense
To every grateful sound of earth and air ;
Pausing at will—our spirits braced, our thoughts
/ —Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.²

The “throng of people” engaged at their “annual wake” next described must have been the villagers of Langdale. The wanderer points to the “craggy summits”³ on the left, and they diverged

as if their quest had been
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall
Of water, or some lofty eminence,
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide,
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,
A steep ascent ; and reached a dreary plain,
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops
Before us ; savage region ! which I paced
Dispirited.⁴

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 43.

² *Ibid.* p. 44.

³ *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 50.

This refers unmistakably to the summit of Lingmoor, the "tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops" being an apt description of Bowfell, Great End, Silver Crag, and Pike o' Blisco, straight before them. The Langdales to the north on the right, Wrynose, Wharfedale, and the Conistone mountains to the south. They walked along the summit of Lingmoor,

When, all at once, behold !

Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs
So placed, to be shut out from all the world !
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close ;
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !
It seemed the home of poverty and toil,
Though not of want : the little fields made green
By husbandry of many thrifty years,
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.
—There crows the cock, single in his domain :
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.¹

The "little lowly vale" is, of course, the little Langdale, with Blea Tarn in the centre, as seen from the top of Lingmoor, the only point (except the summit of Blake Rigg) from which it seems "urn-

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The "small opening"—"where a heath-clad ridge supplied a boundary"—is that which leads down into Little Langdale by Fell Foot and Busk. The "nook" is not now "treeless," but the fir-wood on the western side enhances the solitude, and deepens the sense of seclusion. The "liquid pool that glittered in the sun" is, of course, Blea Tarn. The "one abode, no more," is the cottage, still solitary, now called Blea Tarn House, which is passed on the left under Side Pike. It is still true that up to this nook, "from neighbouring vales," the cuckoo

Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

The thoughts and feelings of the poet, when they first caught sight of this green recess from the top of Lingmoor, are thus expressed :—

Ah ! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here !
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath :—full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure ;
Not melancholy—no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself
With the few needful things that life requires.
—In rugged arms how softly does it lie,
How tenderly protected ! Far and near
We have an image of the pristine earth,
X — The planet in its nakedness : were this
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet : peace is here
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private ; years that pass
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay

CHAPTER V.

AMBLESIDE, LANGDALE, BLEA TARN, ETC.

DESCENDING to Ambleside by Stock Ghyll, the mountain in front, across the valley, is Wansfell; thus addressed by Wordsworth, as it is seen from Rydal Mount :—

Wansfell ! this Household has a favoured lot,
Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
To watch while Morn first crowns thee with her rays,
Or when along thy breast serenely float
Evening's angelic clouds. Yet ne'er a note
Hath sounded (shame upon the Bard !) thy praise
For all that thou, as if from heaven, hast brought
Of glory lavished on our quiet days.
Bountiful Son of Earth ! when we are gone
From every object dear to mortal sight,
As soon we shall be, may these words attest
How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
Thy visionary majesties of light,
How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest.¹

To this may be added the sonnet referring to Ambleside, which follows it :—

While beams of orient light shoot wide and high,
Deep in the vale a little rural Town

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 317.

Breathes forth a cloud-like creature of its own,
That mounts not toward the radiant morning sky,
But, with a less ambitious sympathy,
Hangs o'er its Parent waking to the cares,
Troubles and toils that every day prepares.
So Fancy, to the musing Poet's eye
Endears that Lingerer. And how blest her sway
(Like influence never may my soul reject)
If the calm Heaven, now to its zenith decked
With glorious forms in numberless array,
To the lone shepherd on the hills disclose
Gleams from a world in which the saints repose.¹

The forty-fifth sonnet in the third section of the same series (the *Miscellaneous Sonnets*) is not inappropriate here.

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY.

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault ! Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish ;—how can they this blight endure ?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown ?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance :
Plead for thy peace, that beautiful romance
Of nature ; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds ; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.²

After reading this sonnet one naturally wonders what its author would have thought of the appropriation

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 318. ² *Ibid.* p. 319.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

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Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet : peace is here
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private ; years that pass
Forgetfully ; uncalled upon to pay

The common penalties of mortal life,
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.¹

Before they descend from the top of the mountain
they hear a funeral dirge :

LING MOOR

We listened, looking down upon the hut
But seeing no one ;

and then the funeral procession, issuing from the
cottage, winds away to the south, down the ridge into
Little Langdale. Thereafter they descend.

So, to a steep and difficult descent
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top
Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,
I, more impatient in my downward course,
Had landed upon easy ground ; and there
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold
An object that enticed my steps aside !
A narrow, winding, entry opened out
Into a platform—that lay, sheepfold-wise,
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock
And one old moss-grown wall ;—a cool recess,
And fanciful ! For where the rock and wall
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show

¹ *Excursion*, book ii. p. 50.

Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;
Nor wanting ornament of walks between,
With mimic trees inserted in the turf,
And gardens interposed.¹

This is the recess in which Voltaire's novel was supposed to be found. It was, I think, at a point about 200 yards above the house, in a narrow gorge below a waterfall, where a "moss-grown wall" still approaches close to the rock on the other side of the stream, and where a "penthouse" might easily be made by children.

The question will have occurred to many a reader of *The Excursion*, Did Wordsworth mean this to be a literal description of what he saw in his mountain rambles? or, since the characters are in part ideal, and framed out of elements supplied by different individuals, is not the scene also idealised? I do not think that it is so to any considerable extent. While the actual meeting with an individual called the "Solitary," living at Blea Tarn, and the finding of a copy of Voltaire in a penthouse, belong to the embellishment or drapery of the poem, it would be a total misreading of the genius of Wordsworth to suppose that he would idealise the scenery; or that he would describe it at all, without a broad basis of fact. Inaccuracies there are, as well as idealisations, in his description of the locality (as we shall see); but Wordsworth's mind was too firmly anchored to reality, nay, it was too topographical, to permit of his building up a wholly ideal picture, especially since he meant it to serve as the vehicle of ethical instruction and religious lessons. He tells us (in the I. F. notes)—speaking of the picture given

¹ *Excursion*, book ii, p. 52.

of Thirlmere by Manchester. Wordsworth appends the following note to this sonnet :—"The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.'" Dr. Cradock says, "The yeoman was, I believe, Mr. Birkett, owner of a farm which lies a few fields back on the left of the road, between Waterhead and Troutbeck Bridge. My informant was the Reverend Mr. Jefferies of Grasmere, who was living in the country at the time of the occurrence which provoked the sonnet. I am told that the tree (an oak) is still standing, but I have not seen it."

Another sonnet, number six of the first series, refers to a spot in this part of the district, very easily identified,—and yet, I suspect, hardly known. The following "note" upon it occurs in the I. F. MSS. "This rill trickles down the hill-side into Windermere near Low Wood. My sister and I, on our first visit together to this part of the country, walked from Kendal, and we rested to refresh ourselves by the side of the lake where the streamlet falls into it. This sonnet was written some years after in recollection of that happy ramble, that most happy day and hour."¹

There is a little unpretending Rill
Of limpid water, humbler far than aught
That ever among Men or Naiads sought
Notice or name !—It quivers down the hill,
Furrowing its shallow way with dubious will :

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii, p. 53.

Yet to my mind this scanty Stream is brought
 Offer than Ganges or the Nile ; a thought
 Of private recollection sweet and still !
 Months perish with their moons ; year treads on year :
 But, faithful Emma ! thou with me canst say
 That, while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
 And flies their memory fast almost as they ;
 The immortal Spirit of one happy day
 Lingers beside that Rill, in vision clear.¹

Dr. Cradock writes, "There can surely be no doubt as to the identity of the 'little unpretending rill.' It runs into the lake about 100 yards southwards from Low Wood Hotel garden, at the point where Wordsworth and his sister, walking from Kendal, first came upon the lake. It comes down from High Skelgill, and crosses the road, very near its junction with the lane leading to Troutbeck."

Ascending the valley of Langdale, and following the windings of the Brathay, another of these descriptive sonnets is our best guide to the spirit of the place. It was suggested on the banks of that stream, by the sight of those ubiquitous Pikes, which are visible from so many remote points in the district,—the twin Langdales, as seen on *November 1*.

How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright
 The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
 Which, strown with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
 Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
 Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
 And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
 If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
 Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 263.

Of sad mortality's earth-sullyng wing,
Unswapt, unstained? Nor shall the aërial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.¹

Proceeding up the valley, we reach the small village of Chapel Stile, where is the grave of the Rev. Owen Lloyd, on whose headstone is carved Wordsworth's commemorative epitaph, beginning

By playful smiles (alas ! too oft
A sad heart's sunshine).²

And, as it is not far distant, this is the most fitting place to quote the pastoral on *The Idle Shepherd-Boys ; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force*.

The valley rings with mirth and joy ;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight ;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest ;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food ;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun :
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 123.

On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood ,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

.

It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.¹

With Hackett, "the craggy ridge that rises between
the two Langdales and looks towards Windermere,"
is associated the "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont,"
already referred to, which describes the cottage :

High on the sunny hill,
Luminous region, fair as if the prime
Were tempting all astir to look aloft and climb.²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 161.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 1.

The description of the ruined chapel, which follows, towards the end of the second book of *The Excursion*, is not taken from Langdale, but avowedly from the ruins on the ridge which separates Paterdale from Boardale and Martindale, near which Wordsworth saw the grand atmospheric effect recorded in p. 127.

But it is in reference to the places described at the beginning of the third book of *The Excursion*, entitled *Despondency*, that the identification of details is most satisfactory. This book commences thus,

A humming bee—a little tinkling rill—
A pair of falcons wheeling on the wing,
In clamorous agitation, round the crest
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel—
By each and all of these the pensive ear
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,
When through the cottage-threshold we had passed,
And, deep within that lonesome valley, stood
Once more beneath the concave of a blue
And cloudless sky.—Anon exclaimed our Host,

But which way shall I lead you?—how contrive,
In spot so parsimoniously endowed,
That the brief hours, which yet remain, may reap
Some recompense of knowledge or delight?"
So saying, round he looked, as if perplexed;
And, to remove those doubts, my grey-haired Friend
Said—"Shall we take this pathway for our guide?—
Upward it winds, as if, in summer heats,
Its line had first been fashioned by the flock
Seeking a place of refuge at the root
Of yon black Yew-tree, whose protruded boughs
Darken the silver bosom of the crag,
From which she draws her meagre sustenance.
There in commodious shelter may we rest.

Or let us trace this streamlet to its source ;
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,
And a few steps may bring us to the spot
Where, haply, crowned with flowrets and green herbs,
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,
Like human life from darkness."—A quick turn
Through a strait passage of encumbered ground,
Proved that such hope was vain ; for now we stood
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,
And saw the water, that composed this rill,
Descending, disembodied, and diffused
O'er the smooth surface of an ample crag,
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.
All further progress here was barred ;—And who,
Thought I, if master of a vacant hour,
Here would not linger, willingly detained ?
Whether to such wild objects he were led
When copious rains have magnified the stream
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,
Or introduced at this more quiet time.¹

There is still a single "yew-tree" high up the eastern side of the valley, in the face of Lingmoor Fell, "darkening the silver bosom of the crag." The three men are supposed to be standing on the west of the tarn, and just a little to the north of the fir-wood which overshadows it,

Deep within the lonesome valley.

I think that this place can be identified even by the streamlet, which the Solitary proposes they should trace to its source. But the identification becomes complete to the letter, in the light of what follows.

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground,
The hidden nook discovered to our view

¹ *Excursion*, book iii, p. 69.

A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones
Stood near, of smaller size, and not unlike
To monumental pillars : and, from these
Some little space disjoined, a pair were seen,
That with united shoulders bore aloft
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth :
Barren the tablet, yet thereon appeared
A tall and shining holly, that had found
A hospitable chink, and stood upright,
As if inserted by some human hand
In mockery, to wither in the sun,
Or lay its beauty flat before a breeze,
The first that entered. But no breeze did now
Find entrance ;—high or low appeared no trace
Of motion, save the water that descended,
Diffused adown that barrier of steep rock,
And softly creeping, like a breath of air,
Such as is sometimes seen, and hardly seen,
To brush the still breast of a crystal lake.¹

The "barrier of steep rock" is the low perpendicular crag to the west of the tarn, immediately behind the fir-wood, and the "semicirque of turf-clad ground" is apparent at a glance, whether seen from below the rock or from above. Not only will no other place answer to the description, but this corresponds to it with remarkable fidelity. There are many 'perched blocks' high up the flank of Blake Rigg to the west, and on the slope of Lingmoor to the east, which might at first sight be mistaken for the stone like "a stranded ship with keel upturned," or the "fragment like an altar ;" but though many large fragments of

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 70.

ice-borne rock lie about in curious positions, there is no "secluded" spot on the hill slopes. The "semi-cirque" is the cup-shaped recess between the fir-wood and the cliff; and on entering it the rock resembling the "ship with keel upturned" is obvious. It lies north-west to north-east, and is not an ice-borne block, but a fragment fallen from the crag above. It is now broken into three fragments by the weathering of many years. A sycamore of average size is growing at its side; its root being in the cleft, where the stone is broken.

Holly grows luxuriantly all along the face of the crag above; so that the bush found in the stone resembling a "Druid altar" is easily explained. The brook is a short one, flowing through the meadow pasture of the wood; and is, after 100 yards, lost in the turf slope, but is seen again upon face of the "moist precipice," "softly creeping," precisely as described. The "three several stones" that "stand near" are, I think, the one to the front, in a line with the keel of the ship; and the other two, to the right and left respectively. The "pair" with the "fragment like an altar, flat and smooth," are to the left, and close at hand.

"Behold a cabinet for sages built,
Which kings might envy!"—Praise to this effect
Broke from the happy old Man's reverend lip;
Who to the Solitary turned, and said,
"In sooth, with love's familiar privilege,
You have decried the wealth which is your own.
Among these rocks and stones, methinks, I see
More than the heedless impress that belongs
To lonely nature's casual work: they bear
A semblance strange of power intelligent,
And of design not wholly worn away.

Boldest of plants that ever faced the wind.
How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth
From its fantastic birth-place ! And I own,
Some shadowy intimations haunt me here,
That in these shows a chronicle survives
Of purposes akin to those of Man,
But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.
—Voiceless the stream descends into a gulf
With timid lapse :—and lo ! while in this strait
I stand—the chasm of sky above my head
Is heaven's profoundest azure ; no domain
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,
Or to pass through ; but rather an abyss
In which the everlasting stars abide ;
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might
tempt
The curious eye to look for them by day.¹

A pause ensued ; and with minuter care
We scanned the various features of the scene :
And soon the Tenant of that lonely vale
With courteous voice thus spake—

“ I should have grieved
Hereafter, not escaping self-reproach,
If from my poor retirement ye had gone
Leaving this nook unvisited : but, in sooth,
Your unexpected presence had so roused
My spirits, that they were bent on enterprise ;
And, like an ardent hunter, I forgot,
Or, shall I say ?—disdained, the game that lurks
At my own door. The shapes before our eyes
And their arrangement doubtless must be deemed
The sport of Nature, aided by blind Chance
Rudely to mock the works of toiling Man.

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 71.

And hence, this upright shaft of unhewn stone,
 From Fancy, willing to set off her stores
 By sounding titles, hath acquired the name
 Of Pompey's pillar ; that I gravely style
 My Thebian obelisk ; and, there, behold
 A Druid cromlech !—thus I entertain
 The antiquarian humour, and am pleased
 To skim along the surfaces of things,
 Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.
 But if the spirit be oppressed by sense
 Of instability, revolt, decay,
 And change, and emptiness, these freaks of Nature
 And her blind helper Chance, do *then* suffice
 To quicken, and to aggravate—to feed
 Pity and scorn, and melancholy pride,
 Not less than that huge Pile (from some abyss
 Of mortal power unquestionably sprung)
 Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks
 Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind, round and round
 Eddying within its vast circumference,
 On Sarum's naked plain—than pyramid
 Of Egypt, unsubverted, undissolved—
 Or Syria's marble ruins towering high
 Above the sandy desert, in the light
 Of sun or moon.¹

“Voiceless the stream descends, with timid lapse,”
 is a perfect description of this tiniest and gentlest of
 rills, flowing through the meadow grass ; while the
 “chasm of sky above,” of which the Wanderer speaks,
 though an exaggeration, is more appropriate to this
 spot than to any other in the “lonely dell.” Further,
 it must be remembered that the Solitary speaks of
 this place as “at his own door.” The spot is not a
 quarter of a mile from the cottage. The “huge pile”

¹ *Excursion*, book iii, p. 72.

Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks
 Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind,¹

describes, I think, the crest of Blake Rigg, as seen to
 the west of this retreat,

A place
 Of stillness and close privacy, a nook
 That seemed for self-examination made ;²

There was "a slope of mossy turf, defended from the sun," on which the Solitary invited Wordsworth and the Wanderer to rest, and on which they sat down. It was in a "covert nook,"³ a "hollow dell,"⁴ a "deep hollow ;"⁵ and from it, the path leading out of the glen and over into Little Langdale, along which the funeral train had passed, was visible.⁶ All these things point to the one spot I have indicated, on the west of the tarn. No one who knows *The Excursion* well can visit the locality without being struck by the singularly minute fidelity of Wordsworth's allusions to place—his descriptive accuracy—while he does not attempt to take a verbal photograph of the scene. In addition, all that is said of the scenery is introduced casually, and serves as the mere setting or framework for a moral discourse of the loftiest order.

There are some passages in the discourse of the Wanderer in the next, and finest, chapter of *The Excursion*—entitled *Despondency corrected*—which derive at least a portion of their significance from the place and the circumstances in which they are supposed to be spoken. For example :—

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,
 He thus continued, lifting up his eyes
 To heaven :—"How beautiful this dome of sky ;

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 73. ² *Ibid.* p. 82. ³ *Ibid.* p. 100.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 112.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 134.

And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful ! Shall the Soul
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these !—Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice :
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here ; where thou hast built,
For thy own glory, in the wilderness !
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,
In such a temple as we now behold
Reared for thy presence : therefore, am I bound
To worship, here, and everywhere—as one
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,
From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;
H From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
And from debasement rescued. By thy grace
The particle divine remained unquenched ;
And 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
From paradise transplanted : wintry age
Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart ;
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead !
—Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath : come, disease and want ;
And sad exclusion through decay of sense ;
But leave me unabated trust in thee—
And let thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things—
Father of heaven and earth ! and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content !

And what are things eternal ?—powers depart,”
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,
Answering the question which himself had asked,
“ Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat :

But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists ;—immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies ;
Whose kingdom is where time and space are not.
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,
Do, with united urgency, require,
What more that may not perish?—Thou, dread source,
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all
That in the scale of being fill their place ;
Above our human region, or below,
Set and sustained ;—thou, who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that thyself,
Therein, with our simplicity awhile
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed ;
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense
And reason's stedfast rule—thou, thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves :
For adoration thou endur'st ; endure
For consciousness the motions of thy will ;
For apprehension those transcendent truths
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
(Submission constituting strength and power)
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty !
This universe shall pass away—a work
Glorious ! because the shadow of thy might,
A step or link, for intercourse with thee.
Ah ! if the time must come, in which my feet
No more shall stray where meditation leads,
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,
Loved haunts like these ; the unimprisoned Mind
May yet have scope to range among her own,

Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.
 If the dear faculty of sight should fail,
 Still, it may be allowed me to remember
 What visionary powers of eye and soul
 In youth were mine ; when, stationed on the top
 Of some huge hill—expectant, I beheld
 The sun rise up, from distant climes returned
 Darkness to chase and sleep ; and bring the day
 His bounteous gift ! or saw him toward the deep
 Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds
 Attended ; then, my spirit was entranced
 With joy exalted to beatitude ;
 The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,
 And holiest love ; as earth, sea, air, with light,
 With pomp, with glory, with magnificence !¹

Again :—

'Tis, by comparison, an easy task
 Earth to despise ; but, to converse with heaven—
 This is not easy :—to relinquish all
 We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,
 And stand in freedom loosened from this world,
 I deem not arduous : but must needs confess
 That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
 Conceptions equal to the soul's desires ;
 And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
 Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
 —Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,
 Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
 Want due consistence ; like a pillar of smoke,
 That with majestic energy from earth
 Rises ; but, having reached the thinner air,
 Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.²

The group are supposed to leave the recess at the foot
 of the crag, and to wander back towards the cottage.

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 100.

² *Ibid.* p. 102.

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced
A plot of green-sward, seemingly preserved
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones
And from encroachment of encircling heath :
Small space ! but, for reiterated steps,
Smooth and commodious ; as a stately deck
Which to and fro the mariner is used
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.
Stillness prevailed around us ; and the voice
That spake was capable to lift the soul
Toward regions yet more tranquil.¹

Resuming his discourse, the Wanderer says—

“ Ambition reigns
In the waste wilderness ; the Soul ascends
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,
This shaded valley leaves ; and leaves the dark
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing
A proud communication with the sun
Low sunk beneath the horizon !—List !—I heard,
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth
As if the visible mountain made the cry.
Again !”—The effect upon the soul was such
As he expressed : from out the mountain's heart
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling
The blank air—for the region all around
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent
Save for that single cry, the unanswer'd bleat

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 106.

Of a poor lamb—left somewhere to itself,
The plaintive spirit of the solitude !
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
Through consciousness that silence in such place
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.¹

And the Solitary is again addressed by the Wanderer
in the following strain :—

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,
Does that benignity pervade that warms
The mole contented with her darksome walk
In the cold ground ; and to the emmet gives
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes
The tiny creatures strong by social league ;
Supports the generations, multiplies
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves ;
Thousands of cities, in the desert place
Built up of life, and food, and means of life !
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,
Creatures that in communities exist,
Less, as might seem, for general guardianship
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,
Than by participation of delight
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.
What other spirit can it be that prompts
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave
Their sports together in the solar beam,
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy ?
More obviously the self-same influence rules
The feathered kinds ; the fieldfare's pensive flock,

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 109.

A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones
Stood near, of smaller size, and not unlike
To monumental pillars : and, from these
Some little space disjoined, a pair were seen,
That with united shoulders bore aloft
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth :
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¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 70.

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More than the heedless impress that belongs
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How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth
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That in these shows a chronicle survives
Of purposes akin to those of Man,
But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.
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With timid lapse :—and lo ! while in this strait
I stand—the chasm of sky above my head
Is heaven's profoundest azure ; no domain
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,
Or to pass through ; but rather an abyss
In which the everlasting stars abide ;
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might
tempt
The curious eye to look for them by day.¹

A pause ensued ; and with minuter care
We scanned the various features of the scene :
And soon the Tenánt of that lonely vale
With courteous voice thus spake—

“ I should have grieved
Hereafter, not escaping self-reproach,
If from my poor retirement ye had gone
Leaving this nook unvisited : but, in sooth,
Your unexpected presence had so roused
My spirits, that they were bent on enterprise ;
And, like an ardent hunter, I forgot,
Or, shall I say ?—disdained, the game that lurks
At my own door. The shapes before our eyes
And their arrangement doubtless must be deemed
The sport of Nature, aided by blind Chance
Rudely to mock the works of toiling Man.

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 71.

And hence, this upright shaft of unhewn stone,
 From Fancy, willing to set off her stores
 By sounding titles, hath acquired the name
 Of Pompey's pillar ; that I gravely style
 My Thebian obelisk ; and, there, behold
 A Druid cromlech !—thus I entertain
 The antiquarian humour, and am pleased
 To skim along the surfaces of things,
 Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.
 But if the spirit be oppressed by sense
 Of instability, revolt, decay,
 And change, and emptiness, these freaks of Nature
 And her blind helper Chance, do *then* suffice
 To quicken, and to aggravate—to feed
 Pity and scorn, and melancholy pride,
 Not less than that huge Pile (from some abyss
 Of mortal power unquestionably sprung)
 Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks
 Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind, round and round
 Eddying within its vast circumference,
 On Sarum's naked plain—than pyramid
 Of Egypt, unsubverted, undissolved—
 Or Syria's marble ruins towering high
 Above the sandy desert, in the light
 Of sun or moon.¹

“Voiceless the stream descends, with timid lapse,”
 is a perfect description of this tiniest and gentlest of
 rills, flowing through the meadow grass ; while the
 “chasm of sky above,” of which the Wanderer speaks,
 though an exaggeration, is more appropriate to this
 spot than to any other in the “lonely dell.” Further,
 it must be remembered that the Solitary speaks of
 this place as “at his own door.” The spot is not a
 quarter of a mile from the cottage. The “huge pile”

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 72.

Whose hoary diadem of pendent rocks
 Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind,¹

describes, I think, the crest of Blake Rigg, as seen to
 the west of this retreat,

A place
 Of stillness and close privacy, a nook
 That seemed for self-examination made ;²

There was "a slope of mossy turf, defended from the sun," on which the Solitary invited Wordsworth and the Wanderer to rest, and on which they sat down. It was in a "covert nook,"³ a "hollow dell,"⁴ a "deep hollow ;"⁵ and from it, the path leading out of the glen and over into Little Langdale, along which the funeral train had passed, was visible.⁶ All these things point to the one spot I have indicated, on the west of the tarn. No one who knows *The Excursion* well can visit the locality without being struck by the singularly minute fidelity of Wordsworth's allusions to place—his descriptive accuracy—while he does not attempt to take a verbal photograph of the scene. In addition, all that is said of the scenery is introduced casually, and serves as the mere setting or framework for a moral discourse of the loftiest order.

There are some passages in the discourse of the Wanderer in the next, and finest, chapter of *The Excursion*—entitled *Despondency corrected*—which derive at least a portion of their significance from the place and the circumstances in which they are supposed to be spoken. For example :—

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,
 He thus continued, lifting up his eyes
 To heaven :—"How beautiful this dome of sky ;

¹ *Excursion*, book iii. p. 73. ² *Ibid.* p. 82. ³ *Ibid.* p. 100.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 134. ⁵ *Ibid.* p. 112. ⁶ *Ibid.* p. 134.

And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful ! Shall the Soul
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these !—Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice :
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here ; where thou hast built,
For thy own glory, in the wilderness !
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,
In such a temple as we now behold
Reared for thy presence : therefore, am I bound
To worship, here, and everywhere—as one
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,
From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;
H From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
And from debasement rescued. By thy grace
The particle divine remained unquenched ;
And 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
From paradise transplanted : wintry age
Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart ;
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead !
—Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath : come, disease and want ;
And sad exclusion through decay of sense ;
But leave me unabated trust in thee—
And let thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things—
Father of heaven and earth ! and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content !

And what are things eternal ?—powers depart,”
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,
Answering the question which himself had asked,
“ Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat :

But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists ;—immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies ;
Whose kingdom is where time and space are not.
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,
Do, with united urgency, require,
What more that may not perish?—Thou, dread source,
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all
That in the scale of being fill their place ;
Above our human region, or below,
Set and sustained ;—thou, who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that thyself,
Therein, with our simplicity awhile
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed ;
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense
And reason's stedfast rule—thou, thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves :
For adoration thou endur'st ; endure
For consciousness the motions of thy will ;
For apprehension those transcendent truths
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
(Submission constituting strength and power)
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty !
This universe shall pass away—a work
Glorious ! because the shadow of thy might,
A step or link, for intercourse with thee.
Ah ! if the time must come, in which my feet
No more shall stray where meditation leads,
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,
Loved haunts like these ; the unimprisoned Mind
May yet have scope to range among her own,

Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.
 If the dear faculty of sight should fail,
 Still, it may be allowed me to remember
 What visionary powers of eye and soul
 In youth were mine ; when, stationed on the top
 Of some huge hill—expectant, I beheld
 The sun rise up, from distant climes returned
 Darkness to chase and sleep ; and bring the day
 His bounteous gift ! or saw him toward the deep
 Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds
 Attended ; then, my spirit was entranced
 With joy exalted to beatitude ;
 The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,
 And holiest love ; as earth, sea, air, with light,
 With pomp, with glory, with magnificence !¹

Again :—

'Tis, by comparison, an easy task
 Earth to despise ; but, to converse with heaven—
 This is not easy :—to relinquish all
 We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,
 And stand in freedom loosened from this world,
 I deem not arduous : but must needs confess
 That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
 Conceptions equal to the soul's desires ;
 And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
 Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
 —Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,
 Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
 Want due consistence ; like a pillar of smoke,
 That with majestic energy from earth
 Rises ; but, having reached the thinner air,
 Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.²

The group are supposed to leave the recess at the foot
 of the crag, and to wander back towards the cottage.

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 100.

² *Ibid.* p. 102.

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced
A plot of green-sward, seemingly preserved
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones
And from encroachment of encircling heath :
Small space ! but, for reiterated steps,
Smooth and commodious ; as a stately deck
Which to and fro the mariner is used
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.
Stillness prevailed around us ; and the voice
That spake was capable to lift the soul
Toward regions yet more tranquil.¹

Resuming his discourse, the Wanderer says—

“ Ambition reigns
In the waste wilderness ; the Soul ascends
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,
This shaded valley leaves ; and leaves the dark
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing
A proud communication with the sun
Low sunk beneath the horizon !—List !—I heard,
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth
As if the visible mountain made the cry.
Again !”—The effect upon the soul was such
As he expressed : from out the mountain's heart
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling
The blank air—for the region all around
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent
Save for that single cry, the unanswer'd bleat

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 106.

Of a poor lamb—left somewhere to itself,
The plaintive spirit of the solitude !
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
Through consciousness that silence in such place
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.¹

And the Solitary is again addressed by the Wanderer
in the following strain :—

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,
Does that benignity pervade that warms
The mole contented with her darksome walk
In the cold ground ; and to the emmet gives
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes
The tiny creatures strong by social league ;
Supports the generations, multiplies
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves ;
Thousands of cities, in the desert place
Built up of life, and food, and means of life !
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,
Creatures that in communities exist,
Less, as might seem, for general guardianship
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,
Than by participation of delight
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.
What other spirit can it be that prompts
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave
Their sports together in the solar beam,
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy ?
More obviously the self-same influence rules
The feathered kinds ; the fieldfare's pensive flock,

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 109.

The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,
Hovering above these inland solitudes,
By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call
Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales
Their voyage was begun : nor is its power
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay
In silent congress ; or together roused
Take flight ; while with their clang the air resounds.
And over all, in that ethereal vault,
Is the mute company of changeful clouds ;
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm ;
The mild assemblages of the starry heavens ;
And the great Sun, earth's universal lord !¹

Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways
That run not parallel to nature's course.
Rise with the lark ! your matins shall obtain
Grace, be their composition what it may,
If but with hers performed ; climb once again,
Climb every day, those ramparts ; meet the breeze
Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee
That from your garden thither soars to feed
On new-blown heath ; let yon commanding rock
Be your frequented watch-tower ; roll the stone
In thunder down the mountains ; with all your might
Chase the wild goat ; and if the bold red deer
Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit ;
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,
And sink at evening into sound repose.²

And, by the poet, thus,

How divine,
The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 110.

² *Ibid.* p. 112.

To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate
To oldest time ! and, reckless of the storm
— That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
Be as a presence or a motion—one
Among the many there ; and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument ; and while the streams
(As at a first creation and in haste
To exercise their untried faculties)
Descending from the region of the clouds,
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them—what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies ;
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
“ Rage on, ye elements ! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged ! ”¹

Again, the “grey-haired Wanderer” addresses him :

A consciousness is yours
How feelingly religion may be learned
In smoky cabins, from a mother’s tongue—
Heard while the dwelling vibrates to the din
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength
At every moment—and, with strength, increase
Of fury ; or, while snow is at the door,

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 113.

Assaulting and defending, and the wind,
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work—

✧ Fearful ; but resignation tempers fear,
And piety is sweet to infant minds.

—The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,
On the green turf, a dial—to divide

The silent hours ; and who to that report
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,

Throughout a long and lonely summer's day
His round of pastoral duties, is not left

With less intelligence for *moral* things
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,

Within himself, a measure and a rule,
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,

That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.
Experience daily fixing his regards

On Nature's wants, he knows how few they are,
And where they lie, how answered and appeased

This knowledge ample recompense affords
For manifold privations ; he refers

His notions to this standard ; on this rock
Rests his desires ; and hence, in after life,

✧ — Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.
Imagination—not permitted here

To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,
On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,

And trivial ostentation—is left free

And puissant to range the solemn walks

Of time and nature, girded by a zone

That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.

Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side

Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,

Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred

(Take from him what you will upon the score

Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes

For noble purposes of mind : his heart

Beats to the heroic song of ancient days :
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.¹

And again,

Access for you
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
Which the imaginative Will upholds
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing !

I have seen

X
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell ;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely ; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy ; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith ; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things ;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power ;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not ;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought ;
Devout above the meaning of your will.
—Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 120.

Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,
To rest upon their circumambient walls ;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems ;—choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal ! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here,—if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers,—Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks ;
The little rills, and waters numberless,
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams : and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
† One voice—the solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight—
An iron knell ! with echoes from afar
Faint—and still fainter—as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seemed
To expire ; yet from the abyss is caught again,
And yet again recovered !¹

No apology is needed for giving these long extracts from the sublimer passages of *The Excursion*, which relate to the abode of the Recluse in Langdale. It

¹ *Excursion*, book iv. p. 129.

will be seen and felt by all who visit the place—having first read and understood the poem—how its solitude, its repose, with ‘the strength of the hills’ all around it, its silence broken only by the voice of waters, or of sheep on the hill-side, or of ravens far up in the corries of Blake Rigg, made the neighbourhood of Blea Tarn perhaps the fittest place in Westmoreland for these discourses of the Wanderer. Certain it is that some of the profoundest thoughts of philosophy, expressed in noblest numbers—thoughts which would have interested Heraclitus, and delighted Plato, which would have been hailed by Spinoza, and awakened a response in the soul of Immanuel Kant,—such as those embodied in the last quotation—are for ever associated with this retreat of the Solitary at Blea Tarn.

CHAPTER VI.

RYDAL MOUNT, LAKE, ETC.

- ✧ *The Excursion* was composed, for the most part, while the poet lived at Allan Bank. In the spring of 1811 he removed to the Grasmere parsonage, where he stayed two years; and early in 1813 he left Grasmere for Rydal Mount, which was his home for thirty-seven years, till his death in 1850.

✧ The Mount has often been described, and it has undergone no very material alteration since his death, nearly thirty years ago. The house, — which had in many places fallen to decay during the interval between Mrs. Wordsworth's death in 1859 and the year in which the present tenant entered on his lease, — required a complete alteration within, to render it habitable. Those who find fault with the changes that have been made, — the loss of the old picturesque frontage with its twelve windows, and the removal of the gravel terrace, with the ash-tree near which was hung the 'osier cage' of the doves — must remember that, as houses decay, they must be rebuilt; — which usually implies some change on the old design; — and that as shrubbery continues to grow, it must either be pruned, or removed. It is natural to wish that the memorials of the poet in his old home should be served as unaltered as possible; and this has been at Rydal Mount. At the same time,

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

If Rydal Mount—the house and part of the grounds—has succumbed, like everything else in the world, to the inevitable law by which changes are wrought in all ‘works of art and man’s device,’ those who would like to see it kept up exactly as the poet left it, may reflect upon the fact that such preservation could not, in the nature of things, go on for ever; and further, that had our poet belonged to this generation, and entered on the possession of the Mount a dozen years ago, he would doubtless have set the example of introducing changes upon the old order that prevailed in his time. Nor, in conceding this, do I put a weapon in the hands of those who contest the very object for which this little book is written (as I may perhaps be told). In this, as in things of graver moment than the preservation of houses and garden grounds, change is inevitable; but all change should be on the lines of the past; a departure from it, but a departure guided by the spirit of the past, and loyal to all that was best within it.

Returning from this digression, what Wordsworth wrote, when afraid of being obliged to quit the Mount, and when he purchased the small adjoining property below, which still belongs to the family, may be quoted in proof of the principle affirmed. He refers in it to the old Roman roads in the district around Ambleside, no trace of which survives; and then to the terrace constructed by himself, outside the Mount property to the west, and called in the household “The Far Terrace,” leading to “Nab Well.”

The massy ways, carried across these heights
By Roman perseverance, are destroyed,
Or hidden under ground, like sleeping worms.
How venture then to hope that Time will spare
This humble Walk? Yet on the mountain's side
A POET'S hand first shaped it ; and the step
Of that same Bard—repeated to and fro
At morn, at noon, and under moonlight skies
Through the vicissitudes of many a year—
Forbade the weeds to creep o'er its gray line.
No longer, scattering to the heedless winds
The vocal raptures of fresh poesy,
Shall he frequent those precincts ; locked no more
In earnest converse with beloved Friends,
Here will he gather stores of ready bliss,
As from the beds and borders of a garden
Choice flowers are gathered ! But, if Power may spring
Out of a farewell yearning—favoured more
Than kindred wishes mated suitably
With vain regrets the Exile would consign
This Walk, his loved possession, to the care
Of those pure Minds that reverence the Muse.¹

I may here insert part of the description of the house and grounds, with which the poet's nephew and biographer, the present Bishop of Lincoln, begins his uncle's *Memoirs*, written in 1850. It is graphically told, and no one has a greater right to tell it.

"The house stands upon the sloping side of a rocky hill, called Nab Scar. It has a southern aspect. In front of it is a small semicircular area of gray gravel, fringed with shrubs and flowers, the house forming the diameter of a circle. From this area there is a descent by a few stone steps southward, and then a gentle ascent to a grassy mound. Here

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 14.

let us rest a little. At our back is the house ; in front, rather to the left in the horizon is Wansfell, on which the light of the evening sun rests. Beneath it, the blue smoke shows the place of the town of Ambleside. In front is the lake of Windermere shining in the sun ; also in front, but more to the right, are the fells of Loughrigg, one of which throws up a massive solitary crag, on which the poet's imagination pleased itself to plant an imperial castle :

Aërial rock, whose solitary brow
From this low threshold daily meets the sight.

“ Looking to the right, in the garden, is a beautiful glade, overhung with rhododendrons in most luxuriant leaf and bloom. . Near them is a tall ash-tree, in which a thrush has sung for hours together during many years. Not far from it is a laburnum, in which the osier cage of the doves was hung. Below, to the west, is the vegetable garden, not parted off from the rest, but blended with it by parterres of flowers and shrubs.

“ Returning to the platform of gray gravel before the house, we pass under the shade of a fine sycamore, and ascend to the westward by fourteen steps of stones, about nine feet long, in the interstices of which grow the yellow flowering poppy and the wild geranium or poor Robin,

gay
With his red stalks upon a sunny day ;

a favourite with the poet, as his verses show. The steps above mentioned lead to an upward-sloping terrace, about 250 feet long. On the right side it is shaded by laburnums, Portugal laurels, mountain ash, and fine walnut-trees and cherries ; on the left it is flanked by a low stone wall, coped with rude slates,

and covered with lichens, mosses, and wild flowers. The fern waves on the wall, and at its base grow the wild strawberry and foxglove. Beneath this wall, and parallel to it, on the left, is a *level* terrace, constructed by the poet, for the sake of a friend most dear to him and his, who, for the last twenty years of Mr. Wordsworth's life, was often a visitor and inmate of Rydal Mount.¹ This terrace was a favourite resort of the poet, being more easy for pacing to and fro, when old age began to make him feel the acclivity of the other terrace to be toilsome. Both these terraces command beautiful views of the vale of the Rothay, and the banks of the lake of Windermere.

"The *ascending* terrace leads to an arbour, lined with fir-cones, from which, passing onwards, on opening the latch-door we have a view of the lower end of Rydal Lake, and of the long, wooded, and rocky hill of Loughrigg, beyond and above it. Close to this arbour door is a beautiful sycamore, with five Scotch firs in the foreground, and a deep bay of wood, to the left and front, of oak, ash, holly, hazel, fir, and birch. The terrace path here winds gently off to the right, and becomes what was called by the poet and his household the *Far* Terrace, on the mountain side. . . . This terrace, after winding along in a serpentine line for about 150 feet, ends at a little gate, beyond which is a beautiful well of clear water, called the 'Nab Well,' which was to the poet of Rydal—a professed water-drinker—what the Bandusian fount was to the Sabine bard.

"Returning to the arbour we descend, by a narrow flight of stone steps, to the kitchen garden, and passing through it southward we open a gate and enter a field sloping down to the valley, and called, from its owner's

¹ He refers to Miss Fenwick, to whom we owe the inestimable
on the poems.

name, 'Dora's field.' Not far on the right on entering the field is the stone bearing the inscription :—

In these fair vales hath many a Tree
At Wordsworth's suit been spared ;
And from the builder's hand this Stone,
For some rude beauty of its own,
Was rescued by the Bard ;
So let it rest ; and time will come
When here the tender-hearted
May heave a gentle sigh for him,
As one of the departed.¹

Near the same gate we see a pollard oak, on the top of whose trunk may yet be discerned some traces of the primrose which sheltered the wren's nest.

. . . She who planned the mossy lodge,
Mistrusting her evasive skill,
Had to a primrose looked for aid,
Her wishes to fulfil.

"On the left of this gate we see another oak, and beneath it a pool, to which the gold and silver fish, once swimming in a vase in the library of the house, were transported for the enjoyment of greater freedom.

Removed in kindness from their glassy cell
To the fresh waters of a living well ;

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 64. To this poem the I. F. MS. appends the following note :—"Engraven during my absence in Italy upon a brass plate inserted in the stone." *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 183. "The alarm felt about being 'exiled' from Rydal Mount was not wholly groundless. Some temporary misunderstanding had arisen between the inmates of the Mount and those of the Hall. Wordsworth, however, about this time purchased the field below the Mount, on which he might have built a house if so minded. The field is still in possession of his family" (Dr. CRADOCK).

An elfin pool, so sheltered that its rest
No winds disturb.

"The house itself is a modest mansion of a sober hue, tinged with weather stains, with two tiers of five windows; on the right of these is a porch, and above, and to the right, are two other windows; the highest looks out of what was the poet's bedroom. The gable end at the east, that first seen on entering the grounds from the road, presents on the ground-floor the window of the old hall or dining-room. The house is mantled over here and there with roses, and ivy, and jessamine, and Virginia creeper. We may pause on the threshold of the porch at the hospitable '*Salve*' inscribed on the pavement brought by a friend from Italy."¹

In the grounds of Rydal Mount every walk—the trees, the rocks, the terraces, the views on every side, whatever appeals to eye or ear—all suggest, in one way or another, the work and the personality of Wordsworth, the life he lived there, and what he has done for posterity. The whole place seems consecrate to genius, and to simple, elevated, unworldly thought. The special charm of the Mount recalls the verses of an Indian poet, in which he describes the retirement of the Yogi, or ascetic recluses of his time. The resemblance is, of course, partial, but the fascination of the place is strangely mingled with this Oriental picture, which comes down to us from the times of Chaucer.

Where through the delight of its pleasantness,
Sitting down one hardly wills to rise again,
The feeling of unworldliness grows doubly strong
When it is once beheld :

A spot prepared by holy men,
Helpful to calm delight,

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 19-27.

Thou that didst part the clouds of earth,
My torpor to reprove !

The sonnet on the setting sun going down behind
Loughrigg Fell was suggested in front of the Mount

I watch, and long have watched, with calm regret
Yon slowly-sinking star—immortal Sire
(So might he seem) of all the glittering quire !
Blue ether still surrounds him—yet—and yet ;
But now the horizon's rocky parapet
Is reached, where forfeiting his bright attire,
He burns—transmuted to a dusky fire—
Then pays submissively the appointed debt
To the flying moments, and is seen no more.
Angels and gods ! We struggle with our fate,
While health, power, glory, from their height decline
Depressed ; and then extinguished : and our state,
In this, how different, lost Star, from thine,
That no to-morrow shall our beams restore !¹

With the summer-house, between the two terraces,
is associated the poem entitled, *Contrast: the Parrot
and the Wren*. The wren was one that haunted this
summer-house for many years. I quote three stanzas :

This moss-lined shed, green, soft, and dry,
Harbours a self-contented Wren,
Not shunning man's abode, though shy,
Almost as thought itself, of human ken.

Strange places, coverts, unendeared,
She never tried ; the very nest
In which this Child of Spring was reared,
Is warmed, thro' winter, by her feathery breast.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 223.

² *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 281.

To the bleak winds she sometimes gives
A slender unexpected strain ;
Proof that the hermitess still lives,
Though she appear not, and be sought in vain.¹

Within the house itself, the place where *The Cuckoo clock*—the gift of Miss Fenwick—stood in the staircase, suggests the poem of that name.

Wouldst thou be taught, when sleep has taken flight,
By a sure voice that can most sweetly tell,
How far-off yet a glimpse of morning light,
And if to lure the truant back be well,

Better provide thee with a Cuckoo-clock
For service hung behind thy chamber-door ;
And in due time the soft spontaneous shock,
The double note, as if with living power,
Will to composure lead—or make thee blithe as bird
in bower.

List, Cuckoo—Cuckoo !—oft tho' tempests howl,
Or nipping frost remind thee trees are bare,
How cattle pine, and droop the shivering fowl,
Thy spirits will seem to feed on balmy air ;
I speak with knowledge,—by that Voice beguiled,
Thou wilt salute old memories as they throng
Into thy heart ; and fancies, running wild
Through fresh green fields, and budding groves among,
Will make thee happy, happy as a child ;
Of sunshine wilt thou think, and flowers, and song,
And breathe as in a world where nothing can go wrong.²

The room occupied by Miss Wordsworth, the poet's sister, recalls the lines on *The Redbreast*, suggested to him "in a Westmoreland cottage."

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 46.

² *Ibid.* p. 204.

Part of Wordsworth's note to this poem is to the following effect :—" My sister being confined to her room by sickness, a redbreast, without being caged, took up its abode with her, and at nights used to perch upon a nail from which a picture had hung. It used to sing and fan her face with its wings in a manner that was very touching."

Heart-pleased we smile upon the Bird
If seen, and with like pleasure stirred
Commend him, when he's only heard
But small and fugitive our gain
Compared with *hers* who long hath lain,
With languid limbs and patient head
Reposing on a lone sick-bed ;
Where now, she daily hears a strain
That cheats her of too busy cares,
Eases her pain, and helps her prayers.
And who but this dear Bird beguiled
The fever of that pale-faced Child ;
Now cooling, with his passing wing,
Her forehead, like a breeze of Spring :
Recalling now, with descant soft
Shed round her pillow from aloft,
Sweet thoughts of angels hovering nigh,
And the invisible sympathy.

Thrice happy Creature ! in all lands
Nurtured by hospitable hands.¹

As the biography hints, the tall ash-tree (in which the thrush used to sing) with the laburnum near (in which the osier cage with the doves was hung), grew on the west side of the Mount. Both are gone. The ash is represented in the vignette sketch of the house, prefixed to the third chapter of the *Memoirs*.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 292.

In "Dora's field" the fine oak-tree, beneath which is the pool to which the gold and silver fishes were transferred, still stands; and in the other tree,

In a green covert, where, from out
The forehead of a pollard oak,
The leafy antlers sprout,¹

where the "wren's nest" was built, a wren has built this year (1878); and a primrose grows on the ground beneath it. It is a curious link with the past. How many generations of wrens have there broken the egg!

The hermit has no finer eye
For *shadowy quietness*.

Of another poem, beginning,

This lawn, a carpet all alive
With shadows flung from leaves, to strive
In dance, amid a press
Of sunshine, an apt emblem yields
Of worldlings revelling in the fields
Of strenuous idleness,²

Wordsworth tells us, "This lawn is the sloping one adjoining the kitchen garden (at Rydal Mount), and was made out of it. Hundreds of times have I here watched the dancing of shadows amid a press of sunshine, and other beautiful appearances of light and shade, flowers and shrubs;" and the conclusion of his note expresses so profound a truth so simply that it too may be quoted. "Admiration and love, to which all knowledge truly vital must tend, are felt by men of real genius in proportion as their discoveries in

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii, p. 56.

² *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 228.

Natural Philosophy are enlarged ; and the beauty in form of a plant or an animal is not made less but more apparent as a whole, by a more accurate insight into its constituent properties and powers. A savant who is not also a poet in soul, and a religionist in heart, is a feeble and unhappy creature."¹

The poem concludes :—

Yet, spite of all this eager strife,
This ceaseless play, the genuine life
That serves the stedfast hours
Is in the grass beneath, that grows
Unheeded, and the mute repose
Of sweetly-breathing flowers.²

It is still a lawn.

Then, the quatrain he wrote in the album of his god-daughter, Rotha Quillinan, was suggested by what he had often observed on the lawn of Rydal Mount. These are its two last lines :—

The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.³

Nor can we leave the slopes of Rydal without recalling the delightful lines addressed to his daughter Dora, entitled *The Longest Day*, written in 1817, and suggested by his seeing her playing in front of the house.

Let us quit the leafy arbour,
And the torrent murmuring by ;
For the sun is in his harbour,
Weary of the open sky.

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 168.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 228.

³ *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 40.

Dora ! sport, as now thou sportest,
On this platform, light and free ;
Take thy bliss, while longest, shortest,
Are indifferent to thee !

Who would check the happy feeling
That inspires the linnet's song ?
Who would stop the swallow, wheeling
On her pinions swift and strong ?

Summer ebbs ;—each day that follows
Is a reflux from on high,
Tending to the darksome hollows
Where the frosts of winter lie.

Now, even now, ere wrapped in slumber,
Fix thine eyes upon the sea
That absorbs time, space, and number ;
Look thou to Eternity !¹

And again, the seat on the Mount suggests the *Ode to Lycoris*. It was the sight of the "swan-like specks of mountain snow," reflected in Rydal Mere, and so "transferred," as Wordsworth says, "to the subaqueous sky," that reminded him "of the swans which the fancy of the ancient classic poets yoked to the car of Venus;" (I. F. MSS.)² We know not where the

Wild cave whose jagged brows were fringed
With flaccid threads of ivy,
was ; to which he refers in the second poem to Lycoris. But it was doubtless some one or other of the many "Rydalian" retreats. This is what he says of it—

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 174.

² *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 167.

Long as the heat shall rage, let that dim cave
Protect us, there deciphering as we may
Diluvian records ; or the sighs of Earth
Interpreting ; or counting for old Time
His minutes, by reiterated drops,
Audible tears from some invisible source
That deepens upon fancy—more and more
Drawn toward the centre whence those sighs creep
forth

To awe the lightness of humanity.
Or, shutting up thyself within thyself,
There let me see thee sink into a mood
Of gentler thought, protracted till thine eye
Be calm as water when the winds are gone,
And no one can tell whither. Dearest Friend !
We too have known such happy hours together
That, were power granted to replace them (fetched
From out the pensive shadows where they lie)
In the first warmth of their original sunshine,
Loth should I be to use it ; passing sweet
Are the domains of tender memory !¹

Several of the poems refer to Rydal stream and waterfall. In the *Descriptive Sketches*, written in his eighteenth and nineteenth year, and addressed to his sister, he tells us (in a footnote to the poem) that he is describing "features which characterise the lower waterfall of Rydal."

Then while I wandered where the huddling rill
Brightens with water-breaks the hollow ghyll
As by enchantment, an obscure retreat
Opened at once, and stayed my devious feet.
While thick above the rill the branches close,
In rocky basin its wild waves repose,

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 223.

Inverted shrubs, and moss of gloomy green,
Cling from the rocks, with pale wood-weeds between ;
And its own twilight softens the whole scene,
Save where aloft the subtle sunbeams shine
On withered briers that o'er the crags recline ;
Save where, with sparkling foam, a small cascade
Illumines, from within, the leafy shade ;
Beyond, along the vista of the brook,
Where antique roots its bustling course o'erlook,
The eye reposes on a secret bridge
Half gray, half shagged with ivy to its ridge ;¹

In the line I have italicised, an example of Wordsworth's subtle observation of nature in his earliest poetic efforts will be seen ; and any one who has looked up the glade from the summer-house below this fall, or from the side of the brook, upon the surroundings of the cascade, will find in this poem—otherwise by no means remarkable—a good illustration of how he kept close to nature from the very first, while he idealised everything he saw. The record of actual fact, with a good deal of local colour superadded, was necessary to give him at once a solid hold of the realities of existence, and a point of departure in his most imaginative flights.

Of the poem beginning,

“ Lyre, though such power do in thy magic live,”

Wordsworth says, “ The natural imagery of these verses was suggested by frequent, I may say intense, observation of the Rydal torrent.”

I quote the concluding portion of it :

And, on or in, or near, the brook, espy
Shade upon the sunshine lying
Faint and somewhat pensively ;

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 4.

And downward Image gaily vying
 With its upright living tree
 Mid silver clouds, and openings of blue sky
 As soft almost, and deep as her cerulean eye.
 Nor less the joy with many a glance
 Cast up the Stream or down at her beseeching,
 To mark its eddying foam-balls prettily distrest
 By ever-changing shape and want of rest ;
 Or watch, with mutual teaching,
 The current as it plays
 In flashing leaps and stealthy creeps
 Adown a rocky maze ;
 Or note (translucent summer's happiest chance !)
 In the slope-channel floored with pebbles bright,
 Stones of all hues, gem emulous of gem,
 So vivid that they take from keenest sight
 The liquid veil that seeks not to hide them.

The *Haunted Tree*, the "time-dismantled oak," was in the park of Rydal (*Poetical Works*, ii. p. 180); and there, too, was the ancient elm, with ivy twining round it

In grisly folds and strictures serpentine,
 referred to in the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Part I. No. XXI. It was near the path to the upper waterfall.

No poem connected with Rydal is finer than the ninth *Evening Voluntary*, "Composed on an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty," of which he says, "felt, and in a great measure composed, upon the little Mount in front of our abode at Rydal."¹ In it, Wordsworth rises almost to the level of the *Ode on Immortality*.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 110.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii, p. 147.

I.

Had this effulgence disappeared
With flying haste, I might have sent,
Among the speechless clouds, a look
Of blank astonishment ;
But 'tis endued with power to stay,
And sanctify one closing day,
That frail Mortality may see—
What is?—ah no, but what *can* be !
Time was when field and watery cove
With modulated echoes rang,
While choirs of fervent Angels sang
Their vespers in the grove ;
Or, crowning, star-like, each some sovereign height,
Warbled, for heaven above and earth below,
Strains suitable to both.—Such holy rite,
Methinks, if audibly repeated now
From hill or valley, could not move
Sublimar transport, purer love,
Than doth this silent spectacle—the gleam—
The shadow—and the peace supreme !

II.

No sound is uttered,—but a deep
And solemn harmony pervades
The hollow vale from steep to steep,
And penetrates the glades.
Far-distant images draw nigh,
Called forth by wondrous potency
Of beamy radiance, that imbues
Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues !
In vision exquisitely clear,
Herds range along the mountain side ;
And glistening antlers are descried ;
And gilded flocks appear.

Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve !
But long as godlike wish, or hope divine,
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
That this magnificence is wholly thine !
—From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread !

III.

And, if there be whom broken ties
Afflict, or injuries assail,
Yon hazy ridges to their eyes
Present a glorious scale,
Climbing suffused with sunny air,
To stop—no record hath told where !
And tempting Fancy to ascend,
And with immortal Spirits blend !
—Wings at my shoulders seem to play ;
But rooted here, I stand and gaze
On those bright steps that heavenward raise
Their practicable way.
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look abroad,
And see to what fair countries ye are bound !
And if some traveller, weary of his road,
Hath slept since noon-tide on the grassy ground,
Ye Genii ! to his covert speed ;
And wake him with such gentle heed
As may attune his soul to meet the dower
Bestowed on that transcendent hour !

IV.

Such hues from their celestial Urn
Were wont to stream before mine eye,
Where'er it wandered in the morn
Of blissful infancy.

This glimpse of glory, why renewed?
 Nay, rather speak with gratitude;
 For, if a vestige of those gleams
 Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.
 Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
 No less than Nature's threatening voice,
 If aught unworthy be my choice,
 From THEE if I would swerve;
 Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
 Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
 Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
 Appears to shine, by miracle restored;
 My soul, though yet confined to earth,
 Rejoices in a second birth!
 —'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades;
 And night approaches with her shades.

"The multiplication of mountain-ridges, described at the commencement of the third Stanza of this Ode as a kind of Jacob's Ladder, leading to Heaven, is produced either by watery vapours, or sunny haze;—in the present instance by the latter cause. Allusions to the Ode, entitled *Intimations of Immortality*, pervade the last stanza of the foregoing poem."¹

The references to Rydal Mere are too numerous to quote in full.

Like a fair sister of the sky,
 Unruffled doth the blue lake lie,
 The mountains looking on.²

This occurs in one of the *Poems of Sentiment and Reflection*. What he wrote, "on the same occasion," is exquisite in its allusion to the second summer, with its tender spring-like feeling:

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 133.

² *Ibid.* p. 224.

Departing summer hath assumed
An aspect tenderly illumined,
The gentlest look of spring ;
That calls from yonder leafy shade
Unfaded, yet prepared to fade,
A timely carolling.

No faint and hesitating trill
Such tribute as to winter chill
The lonely redbreast pays !
Clear, loud, and lively is the din,
From social warblers gathering in
Their harvest of sweet lays.¹

These two poems were composed on the Mount.
Amongst the *Evening Voluntaries*, we have two
“composed by the side of Rydal Mere.” The
former begins thus :—

The linnet's warble, sinking towards a close,
Hints to the thrush 'tis time for their repose ;
The shrill-voiced thrush is heedless, and again
The monitor revives his own sweet strain ;
But both will soon be mastered, and the copse
Be left as silent as the mountain-tops,
Ere some commanding star dismiss to rest
The throng of rooks, that now, from twig or nest,
(After a steady flight on home-bound wings,
And a last game of mazy hoverings ;
Around their ancient grove) with cawing noise
Disturb the liquid music's equipoise.²

The latter is as follows :—

Soft as a cloud is yon blue Ridge—the Mere
Seems firm as solid crystal, breathless, clear,

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 224.

² *Ibid.* p. 128.

And motionless ; and, to the gazer's eye,
Deeper than ocean, in the immensity
Of its vague mountains and unreal sky !
But, from the process in that still retreat,
Turn to minuter changes at our feet ;
Observe how dewy Twilight has withdrawn
The crowd of daisies from the shaven lawn,
And has restored to view its tender green,
That, while the sun rode high, was lost beneath their
dazzling sheen.

—An emblem this of what the sober Hour
Can do for minds disposed to feel its power !
Thus oft, when we in vain have wish'd away
The petty pleasures of the garish day,
Meek eve shuts up the whole usurping host
(Unbashful dwarfs each glittering at his post)
And leaves the disencumbered spirit free
To reassume a staid simplicity.

'Tis well—but what are helps of time and place,
When wisdom stands in need of nature's grace ;
Why do good thoughts, invoked or not, descend,
Like Angels from their bowers, our virtues to befriend ;
If yet To-morrow, unbelied, may say,
“ I come to open out, for fresh display,
The elastic vanities of yesterday ?”¹

The lines on the Mountain Echo were suggested while Wordsworth was walking on the southern side of Rydal Mere, opposite Nab Scar, whence the echo proceeded :

Yes, it was the mountain Echo,
Solitary, clear, profound,
Answering to the shouting Cuckoo,
Giving to her sound for sound !

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p. 130.

Unsolicited reply
To a babbling wanderer sent ;
Like her ordinary cry,
Like—but oh, how different !

Have not *we* too?—yes, we have
Answers, and we know not whence ;
Echoes from beyond the grave,
Recognised intelligence !

Such rebounds our inward ear
Catches sometimes from afar—
Listen, ponder, hold them dear ;
For of God,—of God they are.¹

The sonnet on *The Wild Duck's Nest*,

Words cannot paint the o'ershadowing yew-tree bough,
And dimly-gleaming nest,²

was suggested by one which he observed on the largest of the Rydal islands ; the same island in which he wrote an *Inscription upon a Stone, in a Deserted Quarry*.³

It was on the walk between Rydal and Grasmere that the poem on *The Clouds* was composed ; “ suggested while I was walking on the foot-road. The clouds were driving over the top of Nab Scar across the vale ;” (I. F. MSS.)⁴

Army of Clouds ! ye wingèd Host in troops
Ascending from behind the motionless brow
Of that tall rock, as from a hidden world,
O whither with such eagerness of speed ?

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 156.

² *Ibid.* p. 267.

³ *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 63.

⁴ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 49.

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• • • • •

**A blazing intellectual deity—
Loves his own glory in their looks, and showers**

Upon that unsubstantial brotherhood
 Visions with all but beatific light
 Enriched—too transient were they not renewed.¹

Compare with this his remark on the clouds, quoted in the preface to this volume (pp. xviii. xix.)

No single road in the Lake District—not even that in Easdale—is more associated with Wordsworth, than this old (upper) path between Rydal and Grasmere, under Nab Scar; none is more interesting to those who have felt the power of his inspiration, and the truth of his insight.

A humble walk
 this path,
 A little hoary line and faintly traced,
 Work, shall we call it, of the shepherd's foot
 Or of his flock?—joint vestige of them both.
 I pace it unrepining, for my thoughts
 Admit no bondage and my words have wings.²

I have already remarked that Wordsworth composed most of his poems out of doors; "nine-tenths of my verses," he remarked, "have been murmured out in the open air." As his servant at the Mount said to a stranger, contrasting his library with his study, "This is my master's library, where he keeps his books; his study is out of doors." Along this road, under Nab Scar, he walked, in all weathers, composing his verses, during his residence at Rydal Mount, just as he had frequented the terrace at Lancrigg, or 'the Grove' of Grasmere, while he lived at Dove Cottage.

It is now little used, and as a consequence is, in many places, a grassy path—like the terraces on the western side of Derwentwater, or those near Howtown

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 206.

² *Ibid.* p. 207.

under Swarth Fell—with exquisite curves and windings, and endless unexpected surprises, every turn of the road revealing some new feature or combination of features. Here and there small brooks, heard but not seen, keep up “the voice of many waters,” and just serve to make the silence audible. In the early weeks of May, when the green is freshest, though the leaf is not fullest, and the woods are clothed with sorrel and anemone, and the “soft hyacinthine haze” is “dreaming round the roots” of the trees, and the groves are vocal with their earliest choirs, when the reflections of the hills are visible in the lake, and the mountain ridges are glorified against the sky, there is, I think, no more delightful walk in England, or anywhere. It is one of these easy paths along a mountain slope, with numerous ups and downs, intersected by lines of rock, in which every few yards reveal a fresh grouping of mountain and valley, foreground and horizon, such as is to be found nowhere out of England, and, so far as I know, nowhere in such perfection as in this district of the lakes. The views of Loughrigg and of Rydal Mere from this terrace are exquisite. The *Evening Walk*, composed in youth and dedicated to his sister, should be read after one is familiar with this road. The lines are not intended as a description of Rydal exclusively; but they are as applicable to it, as to any other part of the district. I extract the following, which is in harmony with the passage already quoted from the same poem, referring to Rydal waterfall.

Into a gradual calm the breezes sink,
A blue rim borders all the lake's still brink;
There doth the twinkling aspen's foliage sleep,
And insects clothe, like dust, the glassy deep:
And now, on every side, the surface breaks

Into blue spots, and slowly lengthening streaks ;
Here, plots of sparkling water tremble bright
With thousand thousand twinkling points of light :
There, waves that, hardly weltering, die away,
Tip their smooth ridges with a softer ray ;
And now the whole wide lake in deep repose
Is hushed, and like a burnished mirror glows,

.
In foamy breaks the rill, with merry song,
Dashed o'er the rough rock, lightly leaps along ;
From lonesome chapel at the mountain's feet,
Three humble bells their rustic chime repeat ;
Sounds from the waterside the hammered boat ;
And *blasted* quarry thunders, heard remote !

Even here, amid the sweep of endless woods,
Blue pomp of lakes, high cliffs, and falling floods,
Not undelightful are the simplest charms,
Found by the grassy door of mountain-farms.

.
Now, while the solemn evening shadows sail,
On slowly-waving pinions, down the vale ;
And, fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines
Its darkening boughs and leaves, in stronger lines ;

.
The song of mountain-streams, unheard by day,
Now hardly heard, beguiles my homeward way.
Air listens, like the sleeping water still,
To catch the spiritual music of the hill,
Broke only by the slow clock tolling deep,
Or shout that wakes the ferryman from sleep,
The echoed hoof nearing the distant shore,
The boat's first motion—made with dashing oar ;
Sound of closed gate across the water borne,
Hurrying the timid hare through rustling corn ;
The sportive outcry of the mocking owl ;
And at long intervals the mill-dog's howl ;

The distant forge's swinging thump profound ;
Or yell, in the deep woods, of lonely hound.¹

It is worth mentioning that Wordsworth says of this poem, "There is not an image in it which I have not observed ; and now, in my seventy-third year, I recollect the time and place when most of them were noticed."²

The Pilgrim's Dream, or the Star and the Glow-worm,³ was suggested on this road. *The Oak and the Broom : a pastoral*,⁴ has a still closer connection with it. The spot is fixed within narrow limits by Wordsworth's own note :—"The ponderous block of stone which is mentioned in the poem remains, I believe, to this day, a good way up Nab Scar ; broom grows under it, and in many places on the side of the precipice" (I. F. MSS.)⁵ It is beyond doubt on the wooded part of Nab Scar, through which the pathway leads. There is one huge block of stone high above the path which answers well to the description :—

I saw a crag, a lofty stone
As ever tempest beat !
Out of its head an Oak had grown,
A Broom out of its feet.
The time was March, a cheerful noon—
The thaw-wind, with the breath of June,
Breathed gently from the warm south-west.

*The Waterfall and the Eglantine*⁶ is another "poem of the fancy," of which though the intrinsic interest is

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. pp. 2-14.

² I. F. MSS. *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 4.

³ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 52.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 20.

⁵ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 31.

⁶ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 18.

less, the locality referred to can be identified with perfect accuracy. The eglantine grew on the little brook that now runs under two cottages just above the path, which have been built since the poet's time, and marked Brockstone on the Ordnance map. "The plant itself, of course, has long disappeared; but in following up the rill through the copse, above the cottages, I found an unusually large eglantine growing by the side of the stream" (Dr. Cradock, 1877). This year I found it growing luxuriantly in two places.

Taking the lower road from Rydal to Grasmere—after passing Nab Cottage, where De Quincey and Derwent Coleridge used to live, and another small cottage (Whitemoss), built by Wordsworth for the use of the quarrymen at Rydal—we come to two quarries. At the second a road ascends to Whitemoss. Where this quarry now is, there was in Wordsworth's time a smooth-faced, sloping rock, doubtless polished by the glacier that once filled the vales of Grasmere and Rydal. He "used to call it Tadpole Slope, from having frequently observed there the water-bubbles gliding under the ice exactly in the shape of that creature" (I. F. MSS.)¹

Hast thou seen, with flash incessant,
Bubbles gliding under ice,
Bodied forth and evanescent,
No one knows by what device?
Such are thoughts!—A wind-swept meadow
Mimicking a troubled sea,
Such is life; and death a shadow
From the rock eternity!²

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 183.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 68.

A little way past this place—where the quarry now is—the middle road to Grasmere ascends, that which goes past the ‘Glow-worm rock,’ and leads on to the ‘Wishing-gate,’ and the ‘stately Fir-grove.’ The Glow-worm or Primrose rock has been already referred to. It is easily identified, and is unmistakable. It was probably upon this same rock, and certainly on some one upon the right hand as you ascend the short slope, that Wordsworth saw the monument of ice, spoken of in the eleventh of the poems entitled *Inscriptions* :—

I saw this rock, while vernal air
Blew softy o’er the russet heath,
Uphold a monument as fair
As church or abbey furnisheth.¹

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 67.

CHAPTER VII.

THIRLEMERE, KESWICK, BORROWDALE, ETC.

THE road from Rydal to Grasmere also suggests the poem of *The Waggoner*, the opening stanzas of which are perfect in their description of a June evening in the district :—

'Tis spent—this burning day of June !
Soft darkness o'er its latest gleams is stealing ;
The buzzing dor-hawk, round and round, is wheeling,—
That solitary bird
Is all that can be heard
In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon !

Confiding Glow-worms, 'tis a night
Propitious to your earth-born light !
But where the scattered stars are seen
In hazy straits the clouds between,
Each, in his station twinkling not,
Seems changed into a pallid spot.

The mountains against heaven's grave weight
Rise up, and grow to wondrous height ;
The air, as in a lion's den,
Is close and hot ;—and now and then
Comes a tired and sultry breeze

With a haunting and a panting,
Like the stifling of disease ;
But the dews allay the heat,
And the silence makes it sweet.¹

The Waggoner ascends the middle road from Rydal (the reference to the "glow-worms" will show that he passes "the Primrose rock"), and goes down to Dove Cottage, in Grasmere, where

At the bottom of the brow,
Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Offered a greeting of good ale
To all who entered Grasmere Vale ;
And called on him who must depart
To leave it with a jovial heart ;
There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Once hung, a Poet harbours now,
A simple water-drinking Bard.²

He goes on through Grasmere, past the Swan Inn.

He knows it to his cost, good Man !
Who does not know the famous SWAN !
Object uncouth ! and yet our boast,
For it was painted by the Host ;
His own conceit the figure planned,
'Twas coloured all by his own hand ;
And that frail Child of thirsty clay,
Of whom I sing this rustic lay,
Could tell with self-dissatisfaction
Quaint stories of the bird's attraction !

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 68.

² *Ibid.* p. 70.

And now the conqueror essays
The long ascent of Dunmail-raise.¹

As he proceeds a storm gathers, and he barely sees
the rocks at the summit of Helm Crag, where two
figures appear to sit, as two are also traced on the
Cobbler, near Arrochar, in Argyle :—

The Astrologer, sage Sidrophel,
Where at his desk and book he sits,
Puzzling aloft his curious wits ;
He whose domain is held in common
With no one but the ANCIENT WOMAN,
Cowering beside her rifted cell,
As if intent 'on magic spell ;—
Dread pair, that, spite of wind and weather,
Still sit upon Helm-crag together !²

At the crest of the ridge, he reaches the boundary
between the shires of Westmoreland and Cumber-
land :—

That pile of stones,
Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones ;
He who had once supreme command,
Last king of rocky Cumberland ;³

Green is the grass for beast to graze,
Around the stones of Dunmail-raise !⁴

Descending from the top of the Raise, he passes

Wytheburn's modest House of prayer
As lowly as the lowliest dwelling,⁵

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 71.

² *Ibid.* p. 74.

³ *Ibid.* p. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 76.

⁵ *Ibid.*

and, about half a mile farther on, reaches "the Cherry Tree,"—then a public-house, and still standing on the eastern side of the road,—where

'Tis the village merry-night,

and the inhabitants of Wytheburn have met for a rustic dance. After two hours' delay they "coast the silent lake" of Thirlmere, and pass the "Rock of Names."

As this Rock is one of the most interesting memorials of Wordsworth and his friends, and is threatened with immersion under the waters of a reservoir, I must quote the verses in *The Waggoner* referring to it, which were omitted from the poem when first published, but in subsequent editions were inserted in a note. The rock was the trysting-place of the poets from Rydal and Keswick, where they often met; it being nearly half-way between the two places.

An upright mural block of stone,
Moist with pure water trickling down.

—A star, declining towards the west,
Upon the watery surface threw
Its image tremulously imprest,
That just marked out the object and withdrew :

ROCK OF NAMES !

Light is the strain, but not unjust
To Thee, and thy memorial-trust
That once seemed only to express
Love that was love in idleness ;
Tokens as year hath followed year
How changed, alas, in character !
For they were graven on thy smooth breast
By hands of those my soul loved best ;

Meek women, men as true and brave
As ever went to a hopeful grave :
Their hands and mine, when side by side,
With kindred zeal and mutual pride,
We worked until the Initials took
Shapes that defied a scornful look.—
Long as for us a genial feeling
Survives, or one in need of healing,
The power, dear Rock, around thee cast,
Thy monumental power, shall last
For me and mine ! O thought of pain,
That would impair it or profane !
And fail not Thou, loved Rock ! to keep
Thy charge when we are laid asleep.¹

This rock is on the right hand of the road, a short
way past Waterhead. On it were carved the letters—

W. W.

M. H.

D. W.

S. T. C.

J. W.

S. H.,

which are the initials of William Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth, and Sarah Hutchinson. Is it too much to expect of British Philistia, that it will abstain from carving or scratching any other names alongside the initials of this group of poets,—for they were *all* poets? The rock is as yet wonderfully free from such ; and its preservation is probably due to the dark olive-coloured moss, with which the “pure water trickling down” has covered the face of the “mural block,” and thus secured it from observation, even on that highway.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 323.

"The Muse" takes farewell of the Waggoner, as he is proceeding with the Sailor and his quaint model of the Vanguard, along the shining level of this lake. It "scents the morning air," and

Quits the slow-paced waggon's side,
To wander down yon hawthorn dell,
With murmuring Greta for her guide.
— There doth she ken the awful form
Of Raven-crag—black as a storm—
Glimmering through the twilight pale;
And Ghimmer-crag, his tall twin brother,
Each peering forth to meet the other :—¹

Raven-crag is well known,—a rock on the western side of Thirlmere, where the Greta issues from the lake. Ghimmer-crag—the crag of the ewe-lamb—is not so obvious; but I am inclined to think that it is the "Fisher-crag" of the Survey maps and Guide-books. No other rock round Thirlmere can with any accuracy be called the "tall twin brother" of Raven-crag. Certainly not *Great How*, on the eastern shore; while neither High Seat nor Bleabury Fell is visible from the road, and their height in no sense resembles Raven-crag. If Fisher-crag is the "twin brother," why was the name changed? and why not now go back to Wordsworth's *Ghimmer-crag*, a name which, in his day, it had probably borne time out of mind?

The closing lines of the following passage will perhaps suggest the strain of the *Metrical Romances* of Sir Walter Scott, with whom the poet of this district had many associations. The Muse proceeds,

And, while she roves through St. John's Vale,
Along the smooth unpathwayed plain,

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 86.

By sheep-track or through cottage lane,
Where no disturbance comes to intrude
Upon the pensive solitude,
Her unsuspecting eye, perchance,
With the rude shepherd's favoured glance,
Beholds the faeries in array,
Whose party-coloured garments gay
The silent company betray :
Red, green, and blue ; a moment's sight !
For Skiddaw-top with rosy light
Is touched—and all the band take flight.
—Fly also, Muse ! and from the dell
Mount to the ridge of Nathdale Fell ;
Thence, look thou forth o'er wood and lawn
Hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn ;
Across yon meadowy bottom look,
Where close fogs hide their parent brook ;
And see, beyond that hamlet small,
The ruined towers of Threlkeld-hall,
Lurking in a double shade,
By trees and lingering twilight made !
There, at Blencathara's rugged feet,
Sir Lancelot gave a safe retreat
To noble Clifford : from annoy
Concealed the persecuted boy,
Well pleased in rustic garb to feed
His flock, and pipe on shepherd's reed
Among this multitude of hills,
Crag, woodlands, waterfalls, and rills ;
Which soon the morning shall enfold,
From east to west, in ample vest
Of massy gloom and radiance bold.¹

The Castle Rock, in the Vale of Legberthwaite,
between High Fell and Great How, is the fairy castle

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 86.

of Scott's *Bridal of Triermain*. "Nathdale Fell" is the ridge between Naddle Vale and that of St. John, now called High Rigg. The remaining local allusions in the poem are too obvious to need comment; Castrigg is the shortened form of Castlerigg, the ridge between Naddle and Keswick.

The mists, that o'er the streamlet's bed
Hung low, begin to rise and spread;
Even while I speak, their skirts of gray
Are smitten by a silver ray;
And lo!—up Castrigg's naked steep
(Where smoothly urged the vapours sweep
Along—and scatter and divide,
Like fleecy clouds self multiplied)
The stately waggon is ascending.¹

Expressing his regret at the close of the poem that the "living almanac" and "speaking diary," which the old Waggoner supplied to the whole of the district, had disappeared, Wordsworth says

Yes, I, and all about me here,
Through all the changes of the year,
Had seen him through the mountains go,
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow,
Majestically huge and slow:
Or, with a milder grace adorning
The landscape of a summer's morning;
While Grasmere smoothed her liquid plain
The moving image to detain;
And mighty Fairfield, with a chime
Of echoes, to his march kept time;
When other little business stirred,
And little other sound was heard;

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 88.

In that delicious hour of balm,
 Stillness, solitude, and calm,
 While yet the valley is arrayed,
 On this side with a sober shade ;
 On that is prodigally bright—
 Crag, lawn, and wood—with rosy light.¹

The passing of Great How, in this journey with the Waggoner, recalls the poem entitled *Rural Architecture*.² It was on the top of this How that the three boys of Legberthwaite built their giant "stone-man ;" and when it was tossed down by the wind, the next day built up another.

The only other allusion to the road between Grasmere and Keswick is where Wordsworth tells us that the following image in the *Evening Walk*,

Waving his hat, the shepherd from the vale,
 Directs his winding dog the cliffs to scale,—
 The dog, loud barking, 'mid the glittering rocks,
 Hunts, where his master points, the intercepted flocks,³

was suggested to him when he was "an eyewitness of it while crossing the pass of Dunmail Raise."⁴

Comparatively few of the poems describe or refer directly to Keswick and the Derwentwater district. But I have always thought that Wordsworth's two lines in *The Evening Walk*, referring to Lodore, were worth more than the whole of Southey's poem on that cascade :

When Derwent rests, and listens to the roar
 That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore.⁵

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 91. ² *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 166.

³ *Ibid.* p. 8. ⁴ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 4.

⁵ *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 2.

A sonnet was composed at Applethwaite, near Keswick, in reference to Sir George Beaumont's gift of a small property there, which the poet made over to his infant daughter Dora. It was presented by Sir George, Wordsworth tell us, "with a view to the erection of a house upon it, for the sake of being near to Coleridge, then living, and likely to remain, at Greta Hall, near Keswick. . . . This little property lies beautifully upon the banks of a rill that gurgles down the side of Skiddaw ; and the orchard and other parts of the grounds command a magnificent prospect of Derwentwater, the mountains of Borrowdale, and Newlands ;" (I. F. MSS.)¹

Beaumont ! it was thy wish that I should rear
A seemly cottage in this sunny Dell,
On favoured ground, thy gift, where I might dwell
In neighbourhood with One to me most dear.
That undivided we from year to year
Might work in our high Calling—a bright hope
To which our fancies, mingling, gave free scope
Till checked by some necessities severe.
And should these slacken, honoured BEAUMONT ! still
Even then we may perhaps in vain implore
Leave of our fate thy wishes to fulfil.
Whether this boon be granted us or not,
Old Skiddaw will look down upon the Spot
With pride, the Muses love it evermore.²

And in the next sonnet he says,

Pelion and Ossa flourish side by side,
Together in immortal books enrolled :

¹ *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 52.

² *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 262.

His ancient dower Olympus hath not sold ;
 And that inspiring Hill, which did divide
 Into two ample horns his forehead wide,
 Shines with poetic radiance as of old ;
 While not an English Mountain we behold
 By the celestial Muses glorified.
 Yet round our sea-girt shore they rise in crowds :
 What was the great Parnassus' self to Thee,
 Mount Skiddaw ? In his natural sovereignty
 Our British Hill is nobler far ; he shrouds
 His double front among Atlantic clouds,
 And pours forth streams more sweet than Castaly.¹

In the poem composed *At the Grave of Burns*,
seven years after his death (1803), he says,

Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
 By Skiddaw seen,
 Neighbours we were, and loving friends
 We might have been.²

Of the Greta, near Keswick, he writes,

Oft as Spring
 Decks, on thy sinuous banks, her thousand thrones,
 Seats of glad instinct and love's carolling,
 The concert, for the happy, then may vie
 With liveliest peals of birthday harmony :
 To a grieved heart, the notes are benisons.³

Another sonnet, entitled *Nun's Well, Brigham*,⁴
 may be read in connection with this and the already
 quoted address to the Derwent.⁵

Derwentwater lake suggests the inscription *For*

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 262.

² *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 2.

³ *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 145.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 147.

⁵ *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 145.

the spot where the hermitage stood on St. Herbert's island:

. Not unmoved
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones,
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's Cell.
Here stood his threshold ; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man,
After long exercise in social cares
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity, with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things,
In utter solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good man loved
As his own soul. And, when with eye upraised
To heaven he knelt before the crucifix,
While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced
Along the beach of this small isle and thought
Of his Companion, he would pray that both
(Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled)
Might die in the same moment.¹

Also the lines amongst these "Inscriptions," entitled
Near the Spring of the Hermitage:

Troubled long with warring notions
Long impatient of thy rod,
I resign my soul's emotions
Unto Thee, mysterious God !

What avails the kindly shelter
Yielded by this craggy rent,
If my spirit toss and welter
On the waves of discontent?

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 70.

Parching Summer hath no warrant
To consume this crystal Well ;
Rains, that make each rill a torrent
Neither sully it nor swell.

Thus, dishonouring not her station,
Would my Life present to Thee,
Gracious God, the pure oblation
Of divine tranquillity !¹

The following, in a different strain, are the
*Inscriptions supposed to be found in and near a Her-
mit's Cell.* They may be associated with the home
of the Solitary at Blea Tarn, or with this island in
Derwentwater :

Hopes what are they?—Beads of morning
Strung on slender blades of grass :
Or a spider's web adorning
In a strait and treacherous pass.

What are fears but voices airy?
Whispering harm where harm is not ;
And deluding the unwary
Till the fatal bolt is shot !

What is glory in the socket
See how dying tapers fare !
What is pride?—a whizzing rocket
That would emulate a star.

What is friendship?—do not trust her,
Nor the vows which she has made ;
Diamonds dart their brightest lustre
From a palsy-shaken head.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 68.

What is truth?—a staff rejected ;
Duty?—an unwelcome clog ;
Joy?—a moon by fits reflected
In a swamp or watery bog ;

Bright, as if through ether steering,
To the Traveller's eye it shone :
He hath hailed it re-appearing—
And as quickly it is gone ;

Such is Joy—as quickly hidden
Or mis-shapen to the sight,
And by sullen weeds forbidden
To resume its native light.

What is youth?—a dancing billow,
(Winds behind, and rocks before !)
Age?—a drooping, tottering willow
On a flat and lazy shore.

What is peace?—when pain is over,
And love ceases to rebel,
Let the last faint sigh discover
That precedes the passing-knell !¹

Going up Borrowdale, the poem which of all others will most probably occur to the reader of Wordsworth is that which he has called *Yew Trees*. It has some of the grandeur of Greek Tragedy ; the visible grove in Borrowdale suggesting “An ideal grove, in which the ghostly masters of mankind meet, and sleep, and offer worship to the Destiny that abides above them, while the mountain flood, as if from another world, makes music to which they dimly listen.”²

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 65.

² Stopford Brooke's *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 259.

There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore ;
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched
To Scotland's heaths ; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poitiers.
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary Tree ! a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay ;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note
Are those Fraternal Four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove ;
Huge trunks ! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved ;
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane ;—a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly shapes
May meet at noontide ; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight ; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow ;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship ; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.¹

The "pride of Lorton Vale" still survives, majestic

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. ii. p. 97.

in decay. The Borrowdale yews may yet live for hundreds of years.

Ascending towards this grove of yew trees, the Great Gable is visible, to which allusion is made in that pathetic poem, *The Brothers*, which more specially refers to the Pillar Rock in Ennerdale.

You see yon precipice :—it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags ;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called THE PILLAR.

The *Floating Island*¹ is in Derwentwater, on which Dorothy Wordsworth composed some lines which have a melancholy interest. Her brother tells us that she "took a pleasure in repeating these verses, which she composed not long before the beginning of her sad illness."

Of the sonnets on the river Duddon—that "child of the clouds" traced by him so finely in its "radiant progress towards the deep"—I shall say nothing in detail, although many of the local allusions in these sonnets can most easily be traced out. The "stepping-stones," the "fairy charm," the "open prospect" into Donnerdale, the "tributary streams" (descending from the Seathwaite Fells), the "resting-place," might all be identified and described. Wordsworth says in one of his notes, "The above series of sonnets was the growth of many years. . . . Others were added upon occasional visits to the stream, or as recollections of the scenes upon its banks awakened a wish to describe them."² From this and from the evidence

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. v. p. 22.

² *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 251.

of the places themselves, we have fresh proof that his descriptions were not idealisations without a basis in reality.

The following is the conclusion of the series :—entitled *Afterthought*.

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies !
For, backward, Duddon ! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide ;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide ;
The Form remains, the Function never dies ;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish ; be it so !
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour ;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent
dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.¹

The poem on Furness, St. Bees, and the view from Black Coombe, I pass over with a single quotation from that composed *On a high part of the Coast of Cumberland*.

Easter Sunday, April 7,

THE AUTHOR'S SIXTY-THIRD BIRTH-DAY.

The Sun, that seemed so mildly to retire,
Flung back from distant climes a streaming fire,
Whose blaze is now subdued to tender gleams,
Prelude of night's approach with soothing dreams.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iii. p. 217.

Look round ;—of all the clouds not one is moving ;
'Tis the still hour of thinking, feeling, loving.
Silent, and stedfast as the vaulted sky
The boundless plain of waters seems to lie :—
Comes that low sound from breezes rustling o'er
The grass-crowned headland that conceals the shore?
No ; 'tis the earth-voice of the mighty sea,
Whispering how meek and gentle he *can* be !¹

At Morseby, Whitehaven, he wrote in the same year,

The sun is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest,
And the wild storm hath somewhere found a nest :
Air slumbers—wave with wave no longer strives,
Only a heaving of the deep survives,
A tell-tale motion ! soon will it be laid,
And by the tide alone the water swayed.
Stealthy withdrawals, interminglings mild
Of light with shade in beauty reconciled—
Such is the prospect far as sight can range.²

Having now gone over a portion of the Lake District, with a view to identify the localities mentioned in the Poems, and to explain allusions, some answer may be expected to the farther question—What did Wordsworth see in this region specially and pre-eminently? Was there anything original in his interpretation of Nature in relation to Man, and of Man in relation to Nature? This is partially attempted in the Lecture which follows.

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. iv. p.

² *Ibid.* p. 126.

A LECTURE ON WORDSWORTH.

[Delivered, in May 1878, at Cockermouth, to the "Cumberland Association for the Promotion of Literature and Science ;" and at Cork, to the "Ladies' Association for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Women."]

So much has been said about the genius and poetic mission of Wordsworth,—and said so well,—that I daresay some of you, who live in his birthplace, may think that the subject is exhausted. After the criticisms of Coleridge and De Quincey, of Sir Henry Taylor, of Brimley, Clough, Robertson, Lowell, and above all of Mr. Stopford Brooke, and the late and the present Professors of Poetry at Oxford, there seems little need to say more.

And yet, there is no possibility of exhausting Wordsworth, any more than of exhausting Plato. When the time comes for the world to feel that the last word has been said about the great idealist of antiquity, men may perhaps think that Wordsworth also is exhausted. Plato, it is true, moves in a sphere, and speaks in a dialect, that is philosophically more profound ; but he never soars into a more ethereal region. He does not interpret Nature or human Life more adequately, nor does the student of his works breathe a more untroubled air, than that in which Wordsworth lived and had his being.

In order to a just appreciation of this poet two things are necessary. First, we must mark the growth and development, in his own mind, of a new attitude towards Nature, and Man in relation to nature, as this is disclosed in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*,—by far the greatest work of its kind ever contributed to literature. Secondly, we must ascertain the relation in which he stood to the poetical literature of England in the immediately preceding age, and what new elements he introduced into it, by his twofold interpretation of Nature and Man.

[I omit the earlier paragraphs of the Lecture, which dealt exclusively with the first of these two points—the life and individuality of the poet—since that has been often and ably unfolded: and I pass to the second of the questions raised in the preceding sentence.]

I have now to ask, What was it that Wordsworth did for literature and for the world, as no poet before him had done, and no one need attempt to do again? What, in other words, were the distinctive elements of his genius and his power, constituting him a teacher for all time? It is a large question, and one to which many lectures might be devoted.

It is to him, beyond question, that we mainly owe the nineteenth century renaissance, in the poetical literature of England. The so-called poets of the eighteenth century were simply “men of letters.” They had various accomplishments, and great general ability; but their thoughts were expressed in *prose*, or in mere metrical diction, which, in the low ebb tide of creative imagination, passed current as poetry, without being so. Towards the close of the century, however, there was a reaction, and a quickening of

mind, which took shape in many different directions. One of its most prominent signs was a rise in the poetical temperature. This may be traced mainly to two great European influences ; to the growth of modern German philosophy, and to the social and political forces that culminated in the French Revolution. In Germany, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Jean Paul, were all the product of this movement. A new way of looking both at Nature and Society had been inaugurated by Rousseau, and our insular mind—never long unaffected by the great pulse of European thought—caught the contagion, and responded sympathetically in many ways, carrying forward the stream of tendency, to new and original issues. Amongst the poets, in whom we trace the working of the new spirit, themselves influenced from very diverse quarters, were Cowper, Crabbe, and Burns. All the greater poets, though in part the product of their age, are more conspicuously its formative and inspiring spirits. In them, the intellectual and esthetic energy of a period finds one of its most characteristic expressions. And in the group of illustrious men, who created the poetical literature of England, towards the close of last century, and during the first quarter of this,—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, with many others of lesser note,—we find a sudden outcome of energy long repressed : as, in this district of yours, after a tardy spring, one week of genial weather will sometimes liberate the imprisoned life of Nature, and cause it to burst suddenly into leaf and bloom.

Of this brotherhood of poets (which in originality and genius far excelled the earlier constellation of the Elizabethan era) Wordsworth was, beyond all question, the leader. In him, the creative impulse, and the new

attitude towards nature and man, assumed features altogether unique; and he may therefore be taken as their most prominent literary representative in England.

Accurately to measure his genius, however, either as to its positive amount or special quality, Wordsworth must be compared both with his predecessors and his contemporaries. Few things are more interesting than to contrast his work in detail with that of those earlier writers from whom the whole new movement was a reaction, and with that of those who were borne forward along with him on the rising tide of the renaissance, bringing out succinctly the precise points of difference. Take only two.

Comparing him with Pope, you find in Wordsworth a frankness and directness, the absence of all round-about or artificial ways of dealing with and describing things. He spoke and he wrote, because he felt, and as he felt; therefore clearly, freshly, adequately. He did not describe what all men saw, but what the majority failed to see, only because their 'inward eye' had not been trained to see it. Their mind had never awakened to perceive, nor their heart to feel, the significance of the simplest things; and so, in reading Wordsworth, many became aware for the first time that they

had faculties

Which they had never used; that thought with them
Was in its infancy.

They felt as if a new sense had been given to them, or a power, higher than sense, had suddenly arisen from obscure and shadowy recesses. As Keats wrote, when he first looked into Chapman's Homer—

Then felt I as some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

Comparing him again with Byron, you find in Wordsworth a healthful radiance, the supreme note of naturalness. His serenity was due to a clear-eyed freshness of perception, and—what is often denied to him—his objectivity of mind. He is never morbid, or hollow, or cynical; while to those who craved excitement he had nothing to offer. As he wrote in the poem of *Hart-leap Well*:—

The moving accident is not my trade,
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts;
'Tis my delight alone, in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

He could not have wailed out his own sorrows to the world in a misanthropic manner, even supposing him to have felt that 'vanity of vanities' was the last word of the wise, in reference to earthly good. To carry, like Byron, through Europe,

The pageant of a bleeding heart,

was impossible to Wordsworth; both, because his heart never bled like Byron's—

the holy forms
Of young imagination kept it pure;—

and also, because he would have scorned to parade his misery. One element in his greatness was, that with open soul he felt the spirit of the age, which took him out of himself, in the first instance, to nature. He saw that Nature had a revelation to impart which man ought, in 'a wise passiveness,' to receive. This he perceived very early, and may be said to have *absorbed* the idea within a spirit singularly pliant, and open to such influence. It gradually consolidated and matured,—the form changing, but the

substantial part of the idea remaining unaltered ; and it became the increasing purpose of his life to proclaim it to his contemporaries, carrying it out through a long literary career, against all adverse criticism and the want of popular appreciation, and embodying the result in a series of immortal poetic creations.

It is the easiest thing in the world to criticise Wordsworth as Jeffrey did,—the acute Edinburgh lawyer, blind of one eye, who neither “saw life steadily nor saw it whole,” and for whom nature contained no oracle or shrine. It is poor criticism even to say, as others have done, that Wordsworth had no humour, and no dramatic faculty ; and that he, therefore, belongs to the secondary rank of genius. Humour is doubtless a great power, and Wordsworth had little or none of it. But though the sunny laughter of the humourist is a source of inexhaustible delight to men who have to face much vanity and vexation of spirit, it is intrinsically a poorer thing to resuscitate our cheerfulness by laughter, than to rouse our flagging energies by insight and fellowship with nature. It is true that Wordsworth would have had comparatively little appreciation of the intricate culture of our age,—an age that is daily growing more involved. His poetry traverses a few great lines of thought and feeling, more profoundly than any other poetry does ; but its area is not wide. The complex civilisation of the nineteenth century, with its endless detail, was on the whole distasteful to him ; and its best side, its redeeming side, was probably not understood. On the other hand, the cure for the fever and fret of the nineteenth (or of any) century was well known, and profoundly grasped by him. The best antidote to the distractions of life,—to the frittering away of strength, and the dissipation of energy in trifles,—was

understood ; and by no writer, ancient or modern, has it been more nobly uttered.

It is, perhaps, useless to revive the criticisms of half a century ago, the long-buried judgments that were passed, by the guides of literary opinion in their time, on the merits of this new poet ; except, in so far as they afford one of the most significant instances on record, of the powerlessness of hostile or partisan reviews to extinguish original genius, and the certainty of a reversal of their verdict by the next generation. The Edinburgh Reviewers did, on the whole, more harm than good, by their smart writing. They retarded for years the appreciation both of Wordsworth and of Coleridge, and prevented many of our fathers from coming under an influence, which would have deepened their lives and broadened their culture, whether it increased their cleverness or not. But as surely as those who lose their temper injure only themselves, all literary curses come home to roost ; and the verdict of the scornful, though brilliant, essayist, dealing with a mind he cannot comprehend, is reversed in the next generation, and soon forgotten altogether.

We do not now even laugh at Jeffrey's sentence, "This will never do," with which the Edinburgh Polyphemus began his assault upon *The Excursion* ; because criticism has itself taught us that Jeffrey was incapable of appreciating one so new, original, and great. It was his misfortune, as much as his fault. The commonplace mind (and many acute critics have very commonplace minds), however clear-sighted within its own domain, cannot take the measure of an intellect like Wordsworth's. And in this connection, it is most interesting to look back for half a century and compare the estimate formed

of him by the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* with the appreciation of Coleridge, who, during his undergraduate residence at Cambridge, and before the two men ever met, read the *Descriptive Sketches*, and said of them, "Seldom, if ever, was the emergence of a great and original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced." It always requires some originality to discover the merits of an original mind : and, after all, the poets are the best critics of each other ; as may be seen in Mrs. Browning's *Vision of Poets* ; though, to be candid, they are sometimes also the worst, witness, the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. You will remember, I dare say, Southey's reply to the Ettrick Shepherd, who had said to him, "I suppose you have heard what a crushing review Jeffrey has given *The Excursion*."—"He crush *The Excursion* ! Tell him he might as easily crush Skiddaw."

It must be admitted that there are structural defects in the framework or ground-plan of each of Wordsworth's larger poems, and also in many of his shorter ones. It may even be natural to wish that a mind like Scott's, for example, had constructed the plot of *The Excursion* for him, in whole or in part,—Sir Walter would have done it with so much more artistic skill. But such literary copartnery is not possible. Supposing all initial difficulties removed, irregularities would be seen in the work, in proportion to the originality of the minds engaging in it. The respective portions would not dovetail into one another. The sutures would not fit. Then, had the plot of *The Excursion* been prepared for Wordsworth by such a master of construction as Scott, he would not have kept to it. His idiosyncrasy would have rebelled against the suggested plan, as something that trammelled the freedom of his own mind ; and he

could not have woven into the more perfect framework, handed to him by Scott, that wealth of imagination which now lies within the less interesting skeleton of his own story. It is easy to see that all literary work has its blemishes, and that the most perfect, in form and substance alike, must have its *lacunæ*, which are even essential to its limited perfection. But it is not always seen, that excellence in one direction must, of necessity, be balanced by defect in another; and hence, that the wish to possess a perfect poem, or a perfect philosophy, or a perfect work of art, is as utopian and absurd as the longing for a perfect human being.

It is extremely easy to point out the infelicities and transitions in Wordsworth's style, its 'inconstancy,' its occasional abrupt descents to an inferior level, its sinking from ideality into matter-of-factness, its frequent prolixity, due to the poet's lingering over details and elevating secondary incidents to a primary place, and hence 'an eddying instead of a progression of thought.' But what is the use of such nimble-witted criticism *now*? It may be of use to prevent an unaccredited poet from fancying that he has secured a place amongst the immortals, merely because he has succeeded in becoming a clever writer of verses. But when one so great, original, and rare as Wordsworth has once taken his place in that Hierarchy, where so few sit together through all time—and when that place is assured to him by the suffrage of posterity—what is the use of obtruding our petty critical estimates? Is it said to prevent those who belong to his school, and are pleased to rank as his "disciples," from a too indiscriminate eulogy? Good: an intelligible aim, and a useful end. But, surely the world has a superabundance of critics,

X and very few original minds. We are all born critics, but how many are creators? and is it difficult to put, even Shakespearē and Goethe, Plato and Aristotle, on the Procrustes bed of criticism, and stretch them curiously about? Besides, every critic has his critic; and, while admiration for excellence unites men, animadversion divides them. All the above-mentioned faults in Wordsworth's style were noticed by Coleridge long ago in his *Biographia Literaria*, where the enumeration of blemishes is followed by one of the finest and most discriminative eulogies to be found in the annals of literature, and in which—with true prophetic insight—he says, "His fame belongs to another age, and can neither be accelerated nor retarded."¹ This estimate of Wordsworth by his friend Coleridge is so just (and in vigour it has not been surpassed by later criticism) that I cannot do better than quote to you its chief points.

X He notes "*First*, an austere purity of language, a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. . . . *Second*, a corresponding weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books but from the poet's own meditative observation. They are fresh, and have the dew upon them. . . . *Third*, the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs; the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction. . . . *Fourth*, the perfect truth of nature; in his images and descriptions taken immediately from nature. . . . *Fifth*, a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy, indeed, of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, p. 165. Ed. 1847.

injuries of wind or weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and image of the Creator still remain legible to him under the dark lines with which guilt or calamity had concealed or cross-barred it. In this mild and philosophic pattern, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. . . . *Last*, and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of Imagination, in the highest and strictest sense of the word. . . . In imaginative power he stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakspeare and Milton; and yet, in a kind, perfectly unborrowed and his own."¹ With this I conjoin the estimate of another acute critic, the poet Delta. Dr. Moir says, "Never, perhaps, in the whole range of literary history, from Homer downwards, did any individual, throughout the course of a long life, dedicate himself to poetry with a devotion so pure, so perfect, and so uninterrupted, as he did. It was not his amusement, his recreation, his mere pleasure. It was the main, the serious, the solemn business of his being. It was his morning, noon, and evening thought, the object of his out-door rambles, the subject of his in-door reflections; and, as an art, he studied it as severely as ever Canova did sculpture, or Michael Angelo painting."²

This leads me to a fresh point in the estimate of Wordsworth. It was the ambition and aim of his life to construct "a literary work that might live;" and he first wrote his own autobiography in verse. The result was such, that he determined to compose "*a philosophical poem*, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, to be called *The Recluse*." One

¹ *Biographia Literaria*, pp. 161-176.

² *The Poetical Literature of the Last Half-Century*, p. 65.

part of this only—*The Excursion*—was written. *The Prelude*, he tells us, was meant to have the same relation to *The Recluse* as the “ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church;” and he hoped that his minor poems, when properly arranged, would be found “to have such a connection with the main work as might give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, or sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in these edifices.”¹

In this ambition, you see the love of artistic symmetry and completion. He was not satisfied with occasional “lyric cries,” or short swallow-flights of song. He wished to leave behind him a literary whole, gathered up into unity, and with a defined purpose from first to last, stately, with massive proportions, and manifold embellishments.

And in connection with this, note his conviction of the high calling of the Poet, and of his responsibility as an educator of his age. He held that the poet’s function was not to descend to the level of other men, but to endeavour to raise them up to his own level. As he wrote to Sir George Beaumont, from Goslar, “The poet is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing.” The strength of resolution with which he pursued this purpose has probably had few, if any, parallels in literature. Fiercely abused, even ridiculed—not by puny assailants, but by the accredited critics of the day—he went on, with a grand tenacity of purpose, to write fresh poems, of the same character; the creative impulse welling up within him, like the waters of a perennial spring. He felt sublimely sure of the verdict of posterity. And yet, it was not his confidence that the judgment of contemporaries would be reversed that kept him

¹ *Poetical Works*, vol. vi. preface, p. 4.

loyal to his vocation ; but his conviction of the inherent worth of that vocation, his belief in himself, and in the ends to which his life was devoted. His sense of the dignity of his calling as a Poet is the greatest in literature. He expresses it in a noble sonnet to his friend Haydon—

High is our calling, friend ! creative art
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet in their weakest part
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert, etc.

Mr. Lowell thinks that his early conviction of being “a dedicated spirit” led to “a one-sided, as well as to an intense development of his intellectual powers ; and that this was fostered by the solitude of his life, which deprived him of any standard of proportion outside himself, by which to test the comparative value of his thoughts.” Let us grant it. But had he possessed such ‘a standard’ the world would probably have been deprived of much that he has given to it. A ‘standard of proportion’ would have repressed the outflow of his genius, dwarfed his originality, and checked the free course of that stream of imaginative ardour, to which we owe so many immortal creations, and so much of the scattered wealth of his poetry. We may be thankful that the greater poets have seldom had a perfect “standard of proportion.” The rounded completeness which comes of culture would have *maimed* Wordsworth altogether.

It is refreshing to turn from the critics, and listen to the poet’s own estimate of his office, and of its fulfilment in the future. He said to his nephew :—
“ Every poet must diffuse health and light ; he must

prophesy to his generation ; he must teach the present age by counselling with the future ; he must plead for posterity.”¹ To his friend, Lady Beaumont, he writes as follows of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The quotation is a little long, but it is so excellent that I shall give it in full. “ It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet ; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest
✧ ignorance in which all worldlings of whatever rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or from without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage, with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton ? . . . There neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of every twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—amongst those who are striving to make themselves people of consideration in society. Trouble not yourself upon the present
✧ reception of my poems ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ? To console the afflicted ; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous ; this is their office, which, I trust, they will

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 7.

faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. . . . Never forget what was observed by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished ; he must teach the art by which he is to be known. . . . My ears are stone-deaf to their idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to their petty stings. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society wherever found ; and that they will, in their degrees, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

Again, in the same strain, to Sir George Beaumont he writes : " Let the poet first consult his own heart, as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity—to, I hope, an improving posterity."

No one can fail to be struck with the nobleness, I might almost say the sublimity, of these thoughts. The grandeur of dedicating life to *work* has been taught us by Carlyle, in a very significant manner ; but to consecrate it to thought, and communion with Nature ; to prolonged, devoted, wistful fellowship with her, in her ever-changeful moods, while at the time faithful to the moral ideal ;—this is a still grander aim, and a yet nobler achievement.

I shall not say much about Wordsworth's special theory of poetry. He believed that it takes its origin in "emotion recollected in tranquillity." The poet, he held, should represent the incidents or scenes of real life, in which the emotions are at their natural height, or in their intensest outflow. To this, few discriminating minds can take exception. But then,

he went on to say, that since at these times men naturally use a language precisely adapted to the situation, the poet ought to use the same language; modifying it only to this extent, that he must omit the disagreeable, remembering that his function is to give pleasure. Further, the metrical form into which he casts his language delights the reader or hearer by 'the succession of pleasurable surprises' which it gives, and rhyme adds an additional delight.

Now, it is doubtless true that if we remove all the crude phrases used by men in a state of vivid emotion, the natural language they then employ is sometimes the choicest. But, before it is fitted for the purposes of poetic expression, this 'natural language' must pass through a further process of refining, in the alembic of the poet's own soul. The language of real life, if it be natural, spontaneous, and unconscious, very often assumes a poetic form; but the conversational style of speech, however simple and natural, could never become the sole, or the highest style for literary and artistic expression. The most animated and brilliant conversational style does not make the best literary prose style; and the choicest language of real life must come forth from the poetic mint,—not in the hard, realistic shape in which it entered in, nor, on the other hand, artificialised by its presence there, but—*recast* in a form of ideal grace, the 'naturalness' of its original form preserved, and a new adequacy imparted to it. This much may fairly be said in criticism of Wordsworth's theory, as to the language of which the poet should make use.

In the preface to the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* he says that his aim was "to ascertain how the language and conversation of men in the

middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure ;” and, in the second edition, he describes it as “an experiment.” His own practice was better than his theory, and in part disproved it. No doubt, he frequently carried out the latter consistently, to the verge of a bald literalism ; and it was easy for critics to ridicule the ‘tub’ of the blind boy, and the ‘swollen ankles’ of Simon Lee. But, on the other hand, had Wordsworth *not* carried the realistic tendency at times too far, it may be doubted if the literary world, in his own and the next generation, would have learned to appraise it truly. It is to be farther observed, that what his theory sanctions, and tends to, is the use not of the dialect of humble life, but that of simple, natural, unaffected life.

Much more important than the form, however, is the subject-matter of all poetry. It has been affirmed that its essence consists in its form alone,—the form given to thought by language. This is one of the delusions against which Wordsworth’s whole vocation and achievements are a protest. You hear it sometimes said, vaguely, that the movement which in England began with Cowper, which Burns carried out so fully in one direction, and which Wordsworth developed to such magnificent results, was ‘a return to nature,’ to the simplicity and truth of nature, from the artificiality and mannerism of the past. This is undoubtedly true ; but it is too indefinite a statement to be of much value. The meaning of a ‘return to nature’ must be precisely ascertained. Now, you will not only find a clear natural note struck by Wordsworth, in the simple way in which he described what he saw, and was not ashamed to speak of it *as* he saw it—calling the sun, the sun, and not ‘bright

Phœbus,' as the eighteenth century men would have done: but, in addition to this, in selecting the subjects on which to write, he found that his predecessors had departed so far from nature, into artificial regions, and dealt so largely with conventional topics, that he had, in the first instance, to go back, in the homeliest fashion, to the most obvious facts of every-day experience. The idea of writing a poem about sheep, or daisies, seemed to the magnificent men of the Pope and Johnson era to indicate some incipient lunacy. They thought that the man was moonstruck who could write serious verses about 'daffodils,' or 'pedlars,' or 'boats,' or 'waggoners.' Now one element in the greatness of Wordsworth was that, by "the power of a peculiar eye," he saw a meaning in the lowliest things of earth, and in the apparently forlorn specimens of humanity, which few other eyes in his time perceived. He did not roam over the broad earth, seeking materials for romantic narrative, and thrilling story. He asked, What is to be found at hand, if we open our eyes to see it? what meaning in nature? what significance in life? Can we not get beneath the surface of both? and apprehend, in a real and verifiable manner, the truth of that which is unfolding itself around us every day,—instead of floating down the stream, chasing the shadows of excitement, or vaguely sighing for changes? Though intensely fond of travelling, he never could have said or felt, with Goethe, that

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To make room for wandering was it
That the world was made so wide.

On the contrary, within the circle of his own mountains, and among the simple unconventional dalesmen of the north, he sought for a deeper meaning, under-

lying the commonplaces of life and of nature. To Wordsworth, 'the open secret' lay at the heart of the most familiar, lowly, and even common things. The humblest object in nature, if approached with reverence, the most trivial task in life, if discharged with dignity, was at once transfigured, and lit up with ideal grace in the light of that transfiguration.

But how are we to see this latent significance in common things, this worth within the trivial and the familiar? The difficulty is a most real and serious one to many. Wordsworth's answer is substantially this—It is by the opening of the inward eye. There is no veil on the face of Nature, needing to be removed: the film is on the human eye. We do not see what is everywhere around us to be seen, because our organ of vision is impaired; and the malady is, to a great extent, hereditary. But the recovery of the power of sight—that second sight which divines the secrets inaccessible to the material organ—is effected by simple contact with Nature herself; not by the secondary study of her through books, through literature, or through science, but by familiarity with her face to face, in the ever-fresh and renovating processes, incessantly at work around us.

If we are to reach the secret of Wordsworth, however, and find his 'healing power,' we must apprehend something more about it, even than this. There are one or two preliminary things to be noticed. Those of you who have made his acquaintance at all, will not have failed to note the accuracy of his local allusions, the rigid fidelity of his descriptions. They are not photographs: but they are far better. They are *divinations* of the spirit of the places he describes. His topographical allusions are so numerous, and

minute, that some have felt them to be wearisome; but there is no spot, in all your district, to which he has referred, which he has not *interpreted*, illumining it with

The light that never was on land or sea.

It is this element of local colour, in his poems, that has made the whole region of the English Lakes pre-eminently classic ground. There is no place in Scotland associated with the genius of Burns or of Scott—Ayrshire, Tweedside, Loch Katrine, or the Western Isles—over which the ethereal light of imagination still broods, as it lingers amongst the hills and dales of Westmoreland. And if the remark of Mr. Lowell, that the poet was ‘the historian of Wordsworthshire,’ has any force, it is part of his imperishable renown that he *created such a shire*, and gave it a meaning vastly more interesting than those geographical county boundaries, to which the poet’s work as stamp-collector was confined.

Wordsworth possessed, first of all, a wide knowledge of nature; a knowledge that was broad, intimate, minute, and thorough. Hence the perfect truth of his description of the external aspects of a scene, before he sought its inner meaning, or its “soul.” Without such accuracy of perception and report, no divination was possible. He was unerring in the fidelity with which he observed the minute features of nature, which other eyes failed to see. One day some one told him he had heard that he (Wordsworth) had written a poem upon a daisy. “No,” said the poet + indignantly, “it was on *the* daisy, a very different thing!” He had unusually fine physical senses; and, with rapid intuition, he pierced beyond the reports they brought him, of form, colour, sound, etc., that he might dis-

cern the underlying suggestions, with which the scene was charged. His special greatness, as an interpreter of Nature, lay in his power of divining the *genius loci*, that subtle arrowy glance going direct to the very core, always adequate, and usually profound, often tenderly human; in every instance bringing back some secret, and disclosing the immeasurable significance of common things. He was never contented with deciphering outward features. Forms, colours, sounds, always led up to some

Remoter charm
Unborrowed from the eye,

or ear. Nature's face was full of *expression*; and this expression revealed *character*, as truly as a human face reveals the workings of emotion in a human soul. Other poets were content simply to chronicle natural phenomena, as beautiful or grand, picturesque or sublime. Wordsworth always asked, What is the meaning of Nature, in those places where she has concentrated her expressiveness, and in those moods in which she seems to be unburdening herself to man? What is the secret of the glory of the sky, at sunrise or sunset? and their difference? What is the meaning of the motions and balancings of the clouds? of the alternate wail and sigh of either wind or ocean? Or, if he did not *ask* these questions, he answered them without asking. All that is distinctive in his poetry, grows out of the belief that Nature's soul has a definite expression—whether in rock or flower, in tree or stream—that can be recognised. It can appeal to us, and mould us. In each natural object some 'invisible thing' is 'clearly seen.' Wordsworth, in short, had a strong, intuitive grasp of that subtle spirit of the Beautiful, which breathes throughout the whole

framework of Nature, emanating from, and expressing itself in, the life of every material thing.

But it is important to go, if possible, a little deeper down, and see to what this distinctive feature amounted; because we hear it constantly reiterated,—and with vague inaccuracy affirmed,—that Wordsworth was *a subjective poet*, that he thrust himself into the scene he described, and saw his own individuality (nay his own idiosyncrasies) mirrored in nature. Nothing could be more erroneous; nothing less exact. It is both an utterly irrelevant, and a totally ignorant criticism. It is irrelevant, because I suppose it is not possible for a poet, any more than for a critic, to escape from his own shadow. It is ignorant, because Wordsworth's subjectivity is not greater than, it is not nearly as great as, that of his contemporaries,—Scott only excepted. Byron's heroes, for example, are more Byronic, than Wordsworth's are Wordsworthian. It is one of the most foolish and futile of charges, either that he was imprisoned within the circle of his own subjective broodings about Nature, or that his characters were the mere duplicates of himself. Not only was "the mind of man" (as he says)

The haunt and the main region of my song;

but Nature was nothing to him apart from man. Still further, it was man as social, man in relation to his fellows, man organised in society, that chiefly interested him.

The charge of throwing his own subjectivity into Nature, and "seeing himself in all he saw," is so foolish that it is difficult to deal with it. He saw a life in Nature distinct from his own, yet kindred to it, a reciprocal and complementary life. You may say, if you choose, that *Imagination* enabled him to do this;

and that, without imagination, he could not have been brought into such a living *rappor*t with Nature, as certainly, without it, he never could have chronicled the things he saw. But imagination gives insight, as well as creative power ; and insight must in all cases go before creation, if the latter is worth anything. Poetic creation is simply the embodiment in an imaginative form, or an intellectual and esthetic shape, of what has previously been discerned or divined. Now Wordsworth's very specialty as a poet lay in this, that he interpreted the universe in terms of humanity, *without* throwing over it the mantle of his own subjectivity. He read its secret, by the use of his own faculties of course, and with the aid of the 'auxiliar light' which 'came from his mind ;' but not by a process of mere idealisation. He saw Nature through his own lens—less he could not do, without ceasing to be a poet, or even a man. But he did more than this. He saw into Nature's inmost heart, and was throughout and pre-eminently a seer, and not an idealiser. He perceived that the universe is animated by a living and recognisable soul ; that we do not err in describing it as at least quasi-human : and conversely, he not only desired to bring humanity into vital contact with the sunshine of the broad world, and to

Feed it, 'mid nature's old felicities ;

but he saw that human life finds its deepest interpretation, in direct relation to nature. Thus Nature reveals man, while Man mirrors nature.

Not only so : not only was Nature, according to Wordsworth, instinct with personality (or what resembled it), but the spirit or soul of nature, animating and informing it everywhere, was recognisable and realisable in detail. It was not always, nor indeed usually

recognisable, as one vast all-comprehending Force: but was to our vision, divided into many separate forms and phases. Each single object, every flower, every mountain, every star, had its spiritual essence or informing soul, which was vitally related to the larger soul of the world, the poet could not tell how. It was for the speculative philosopher to say,—if he could,—what were the relations between the separate objects, and the universe as a whole. The poet might occasionally refer to the underlying unity, which he realised as vividly as the philosopher, or more so. But his special function was to interpret the detail, the specialisation of nature; its variety, rather than its unity.

Thus, the soul of nature, localised here and there,—just as humanity is individualised in separate men and women—has, to the poet, its own peculiar life and changing moods. Not only has each mountain or stream its *genius loci*; but that genius is fully as changeable as man—now bright and radiant, again depressed and dull. It is alternately glad and festive, mourning and bereaved. Nature is seen toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing, just as we toil, rejoice, and sorrow. And this is not the polytheistic notion of separate beings, as tutelary gods, or oreads, dryads, etc., inhabiting distinct localities. These were detached from nature, spirits that came and went, and were as capricious in their comings and goings, as fairies are alleged to be. But there is a wide interval between a belief in ghosts and fairies, and a recognition of those ‘souls of lonely places,’ or the ‘spirit of the woods,’ mountains, and floods, of which Wordsworth speaks. In the latter case, the inner spirit of the Universe is recognised revealing itself to us in the breathing life of the place,—a portion of the infinite existence, not really cut off from the rest, but only seeming to be so, to our finite

imagination. The link connecting part with part may be too subtle for us to trace, but it exists, and is felt to exist, at the very moment when our perception of difference in the parts is keenest.

Thus 'the mighty being' of Nature ever 'awake'¹ manifests itself incessantly and simultaneously, in a hundred different ways, all over the world; its diversity not destroying its unity, nor its unity abolishing its diversity. It is too vast for human realisation as a whole. In virtue, however, of its apparent divisions, its dismemberment to the human eye—assuming, as it does, an immense variety of phases—it can be realised in detail; and, in fellowship with any one of the details, the soul of man has unquestionable fellowship with the very essence of nature. Each of these, when apprehended by us, awakens a kindred or correspondent state of feeling, while our conviction of the profound unity of the whole remains unshaken. The highest life of each separate object having thus an interior relation to the life of every other, there is reciprocity amongst them all, a never-ceasing intercommunion, as the common element ebbs and flows throughout them. This is admirably expressed by Mr. Stopford Brooke. He says:—

"This idea is the loveliest of all which Wordsworth has introduced into English poetry, and it flowed from his conception of everything in nature having its own peculiar life. . . . There was ceaseless intercommunion founded on the unutterable love which flowed through all things, and with which everything acted on every other. The whole world was linked together; every part, every element, gave and received, honoured and did service, to each other. . . . And they delight in social intercourse, like

¹ *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, part i. Sonnet 30 (vol. ii. p. 275).

friends who love each other—there is no jar, no jealousy, no envy there—their best joy is in being kind to one another.”¹

And better illustrations of this idea, than those which Mr. Brooke has selected from the poems, could not be chosen :—

Through all her depth St. Mary's lake
Is visibly delighted,
For not a feature of the hills
Is in that mirror slighted.

Or again—

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a source of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

Love, now an universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth,
It is the hour of feeling.

It must be observed, however, that the perception of this feature of the life of Nature—its semi-human characteristic—and the intercommunion and reciprocity to which it gives rise, is not possible at all times. It is only perceived when certain subjective states of the percipient mind correspond with special objective conditions in Nature itself. When these conditions are realised, material forms seem but the raiment of a life beneath them, which alone is real. As this life is not discerned by us equally in every object, but only in some, so it is not apprehended every moment, but only occasionally. If an apocalypse were constant, it would be like the sunrise, and

¹ *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 107.

cease to be an apocalypse ; just as a constant discernment of the underlying unity of things would prevent us from recognising the diversity which plays upon the surface. But when our faculties are at their keenest stretch, and when our external conditions and surroundings are favourable—as when on the high hill tops, or under the clear vault of the sky on a still and luminous night, or by the shore of the everlasting sea,—the veil is at its thinnest ; and the conviction is flashed upon us, that the life of Nature is fundamentally kindred to our own. The persuasion that Nature desires our fellowship is then no fancy, but an intuition of the heart and the intellect and the esthetic sense combined. For example, while you gaze into the heart of some tenderly beautiful flower as it looks up from the moorland to the sky, or listen to the sound of running waters on a far-off mountain side, or watch the radiance of the clouds that gather round the setting sun, does the sense of solitude deepen ? or does the feeling of a latent bond, a hidden social unity survive ? Is the sole or the prevailing thought, that of the coldness, the silence, and unrecognisableness of Nature, or of its kindredness, its affinity, and its friendship ? Whatever X it may be with the *laws* of nature,—whether they do or do not correspond, as Mr. Hinton put it, to the habits of a friend,—the *life* of nature (of which the laws are the expression) is a continual revelation of *character* ; unfolding itself, now more clearly, and again more dimly, as the clouds break or gather upon its face, and as the eye of the beholder is fresher or duller in its perceptions.

I need scarcely guard myself against mistake, by adding that it is easy to carry this notion of kindredness too far, and thus to degrade it altogether. If we do not recognise the transcendent unlikeness of nature to man, along with the likeness which

exists, the latter idea is more than vulgarised. It becomes distorted and untrue. Only through the recognition of the former notion does the latter gain its reality and its grandeur. We do not need, however, to be reminded of the difference, so much as of the resemblance. The former idea always takes care of itself. It is constantly suggested to us, and is sometimes painfully obtrusive; the latter is only occasionally grasped, often dimly perceived, and always fugitive. Too soon the curtain falls, the glory fades; and after every disclosure of Nature's heart, in the most lovely of its apparitions, we are again in the presence of the old gray skies, the silent and the seemingly unresponsive heaven. But the two feelings, whether major or minor, whether for the time being in the foreground or the background of consciousness, are complementary ones. They are, indeed, but the two sides of the knowableness and the unknowableness of the Infinite.

Our inability to look on nature, as Wordsworth did, is as often due to our artificiality, as to our shallowness. If nature is to continue to subdue to teach and to mould, as well as to fascinate us, we must retain the heart of childhood, with its natural wonder, delight, admiration, and reverence,—let the intellect develop as it may. In a 'wise passiveness' we must receive her sweet influences from without. She won't yield her secrets to us when we are being whirled along on the surface of life's stream, absorbed and excited by artificial things, or magnetised by any secondary interest. This was nobly taught by Wordsworth in the sonnet beginning—

The world is too much with us. Late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in Nature that is ours.

There is a most intimate relation between Wordsworth's moral elevation and his intellectual insight. The artificiality and mannerism, the haste and distraction, of our modern life, with its many prolix ceremonies, prevents that simple *rapproch* of the mind with Nature, in which all natural poetry is born. Furthermore, the marriage of the soul with nature is a union of equals; and its result is a realisation of that other or higher self, our *alter ego* in Nature, not (as I have already said) as an idealisation of the mind, but as a reality of mental vision. Transcending all subjective bonds, we enter a region 'where time and space are not,' a world of higher apperception, in which the unity of self and not-self, of the mind within and the universe without, is clearly understood,—while neither the one nor the other is overborne, but their fundamental separateness preserved.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon another feature, kindred to this, in the teaching of Wordsworth. It is Nature's office in curing us of morbidity and melancholy, as well as of artificiality; its healing and restoring function,—calming us, reanimating and reassuring us. He shows, as few teachers have shown, that while full of sympathy with us, Nature will not abide our sadnesses. She feels them to be an intrusion on her peace, her immense latent life, out of which all that allays them proceeds. Our introspectiveness and self-consciousness are rebuked by Nature, whenever we are alone with her, and open to her influences: and it is as necessary that these should be taken out of us, as the conceit that we have fathomed her ways and processes of work. She reveals an impersonal Order as well as a personal power, a transcendent and utterly mysterious life, with which we may not presume to be too familiar; and it is merely this side that is

turned toward us,—the seemingly stony and unresponsive side,—when we complain of her mysteriousness. But who will say, that, in this, she does not educate us also?

In the same connection, I claim for Wordsworth a clear knowledge of the profoundest problems, with which the human mind has grappled, from Heraclitus to Immanuel Kant.¹ He seems to have penetrated to the very core of philosophical ideas, not by laboured argumentation, but by intuitive discernment,—both intellectual and moral,—which began early and developed rapidly, keeping pace with the growth of his imagination. By that consummate vision, which is superior to all processes of reasoning, he reached the ultimate data of speculative philosophy and theology.

Further, in dealing with the perennial problems, Wordsworth almost always keeps to their elements. He therefore moves within a verifiable region; and hence, his treatment of the questions cannot be superseded. His poetry is intrinsically durable; not only because, like all poetry of the first magnitude, it is a joy to the human race for ever; but also because, it has no mythological elements, which Science may some day compel us to lay aside. He carries us into a region, altogether unaffected by the discoveries, which imperil a merely traditional faith. Let science march forward as it may, and where it may, Wordsworth's

†

¹ It is for this reason that a knowledge of Wordsworth is one of the very best introductions to the Platonic (or any other) Philosophy. There are numerous passages in *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, as well as in the minor poems, which condense within them the essence of the philosophical systems of Plato, Spinoza, and Kant. Many a single line of Wordsworth's contains a precise and singularly felicitous embodiment of the speculative ideas which lie at the heart of these systems.

poetry moves in a sphere unaffected by its conclusions,—a sphere indeed to which its widest generalisations bear witness, and pay tribute.

And this leads me to speak of the bracing effect, the moral tonic, to be found in his poetry. It presents a high ideal of life, elevated alike above the sordid and the capricious, above the trivial the artificial and the ignoble. Hence there is no *ennui*, no *tedium* ✕ *vita*, in Wordsworth. Every one knows his reference in the sonnet to 'plain living and high thinking:' but few have adequately realised the immense serenity, the large divine tranquillity, and the indefinite ✕ hopefulness, that breathe through all his writings. In him, aspiration blends with contentment; placidity and calm, with effort to be other than we are, and with a belief in the endless possibilities of human nature. This is the secret of what Mr. Arnold has so happily ✕ called his 'healing power.' You feel it, just as you feel the effect of mountain air after languishing in a city. ✕ The 'strength of the hills' is in almost everything he wrote. And there is no influence so good and gracious as Wordsworth's, so directly *sanative*, to those who have felt a relaxation of fibre, from long pondering of the 'riddle of the painful earth,' the antinomies of our intellectual and moral nature. There is a well-known sense of hopelessness, when one is beaten down before the mysteries of the universe, if these have been wrestled with and found insoluble, and a feeling of languor and indifference—the *cui bono* feeling—is incipient. To one, in such a mood of apathy or life-weariness, the influence of Wordsworth is incomparable. His poetry is a moral tonic, reinvigorating the heart, by taking it straight away to some fresh natural well of feeling, or of thought. Great as he is, therefore, as a poet, I consider him still greater as a

moralist. His sense of the infinite moral unity of which we are but parts, and his conviction of a

Central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation,

are as guide-posts in ethics. In the forest paths of human life, with their labyrinthine windings, or, when out in 'the open,' cross-ways meet and perplexity is inevitable, he, of all poets, best helps you to know where you are, what direction to take, and how to travel forward with serenity, and even with joy. If his teaching—as embodied, for example, in the *Ode to Duty*, or in the chapter of *The Excursion* entitled "Despondency Corrected,"—is inconsistent with a Goethean sweep and universality, delighting in all things with frank objectivity, simply *because they are*, its narrowness is the narrowness of one who has a root in himself, of one who has found

Within himself a measure and a rule.

And one, thus taught and disciplined, will 'live and breathe,' as he says—

For noble purposes of mind ; his heart
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days ;
† His eye distinguishes, his heart creates.

In all that I have said, I have been giving you the merest introduction to the poetry and poetic mission of Wordsworth. Those of you who have not yet begun the earnest study of this poet—and he requires not only to be read but to be studied—may consult, along with the poems themselves, two discussions, which, amongst the large literature that has now accumulated on the subject, are, in my judgment, by far the most thorough and satisfactory;—I refer to Principal Shairp's *Essay on Wordsworth* originally contributed to the *North British Review*, and republished in his *Studies*

in *Poetry and Philosophy*; and Mr. Stopford Brooke's volume entitled *Theology in the English Poets*. The former is more condensed and finished as a work of art; the latter is more detailed in its analysis, and almost exhaustive in one direction.

Before closing, I merely add, as I have already hinted more than once, that there is no poet after Shakspeare more worthy of prolonged, careful, and even reverential study, and especially of study by women.¹ There is none whose influence on character is more ennobling, and from contact with whose spirit you can draw a serener inspiration. And though our poetical literature is now becoming more complex, and many a kindred spirit has embodied fresh forms of Imagination in the raiment of our English speech, since Wordsworth breathed his last at Rydal Mount, he remains one of those

Stars pre-eminent in magnitude
Which, from the zenith, dart their beams,

of which he spoke; and he has deeper things to teach us, in our nineteenth century haste and high pressure, than any of his co-mates, who are seated along with him on the imperial height.

It may be as difficult for some to get within his circle, as it is for others to understand Beethoven, or Fra Angelico. Nevertheless, his is an 'open secret,' and, as he said of Burns,

In busiest street, and loneliest glen,
Are felt the flashes of his pen.
He rules 'mid winter snows, and where
Bees fill their hives.
Deep in the genial heart of men
His power survives.

¹ This paragraph was addressed to the audience at Cork.

And sure I am that, long as the streams of Westmoreland sing their songs of 'peace with quiet blending,' long as Helvellyn rears its head above the neighbouring hills, and the sunlight and the moonlight come and go amongst the mountains, the radiance of this Poet's genius will shed a more ethereal light over the whole district, and will disclose the inmost soul of Nature, and the boundless significance of Life, to the English generations of the future.

✓ He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round ;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth,
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us, and we had ease ;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sunlit fields again ;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned ; for there was shed,
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely fur'd,
The freshness of the early world.

THE END.



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